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THE STRUGGLE FOR AUTONOMY

Seeing gold and forest like a local government in Northern Burkina Faso

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A dissertation submitted to the College of Science and Engineering in accordance with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the School of Geosciences.

The University of Edinburgh

July 2014

Declaration of own work

I declare that the following thesis has been entirely composed by myself. It has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

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Date 17.12.2014

Word count: 98,000

Abstract

This thesis seeks to clarify the role that democratic decentralisation reforms play in dynamics of state building in developing societies where states are often qualified as weak. Within the literature, on natural resource management, democratic decentralisation is seen to either erode public authority in favour of non-state actors, or to strengthen it, as a repertoire of domination hiding an illegitimate re-centralisation of control. In the light of these contradictory statements, I propose positing the exercise of public authority as an empirical question. Situating my work within geography and anthropology, I examine the exercise of public authority, that I call institutional power, in a context of competing claims to gold and forest resources in the commune of Séguénéga in North Burkina Faso. An analysis of the way overlapping and competing institutions of power relate in the everyday in the field of decentralisation brings to light the significance of autonomy, and I argue that the relevance of the state is enhanced under decentralisation through the politics of autonomy. Three concepts are mobilised to make this case. Regulation sheds light on the fact that the forms of institutional power over gold and woodfuel are characterised by the degree of autonomy that they enjoy vis-à-vis government. Recognition as a concept queries the durability of institutional power. It shows that where the rule of law weak, or where autonomy vis-à-vis the rule of law is greater, institutions of power emerge from the relations of recognition between government and non-government sanctioned institutions of power. As these institutions operate at the twilight of lawfulness and lawlessness, the democratic decentralisation reform presents an opportunity for these institutions to increase their authority. This claim is made through the operation of the concept of political field. I show that democratic decentralisation has created a democratic field, which is semi-autonomous from the bureaucratic and customary fields. As institutions of power struggle for authority over gold and forest resources in the democratic field, a particular kind of politics emerges and is articulated around claims of autonomy. Through the politics of autonomy, the rule of law is recognised by both state and non-state sanctioned institutions of power, and the state is being built.

Lay summary of the thesis

This is a brief summary intended to facilitate knowledge transfer and enhance accessibility to a general audience. It is a requirement of the General Postgraduate Degree Programme Regulations (these are available via <http://www.drps.ed.ac.uk>)

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<i>Title of Thesis:</i>	The struggle for autonomy: Seeing forest and gold like a local government in North Burkina Faso		

A concern has emerged in recent years about the intensification of resource conflicts in developing societies, particularly in Africa. These conflicts are often explained as a consequence of incremental factors, such as population growth and environmental abundance or scarcity, but for some time they have also been connected to narratives of 'bad governance'. At the heart of concerns over bad governance is the perceived breakdown of the rule of law, and the failure of the nation-state to exercise public authority over people and territory, a state of affairs often characterised as the manifestation of a 'weak state'. Burkina Faso is a typical case of such a representation of 'weak state', where government-sanctioned institutions are unable to carry out their mandate, and where the rule of law is perceived to carry little relevance in the everyday. How then does a 'Burkinabè state' continue to exist in a context where the rule of law is weak?

The thesis examines this questions through two national policies that aim to address contentious resource politics by improving governance. The first one is the formalisation of local rights over resources, and the second is to 'bring government closer to citizens' through a democratic decentralisation reform that devolves greater governance power to local elected governments. In this thesis I examines the extent to which these policies transform the nature of competition over resource production, particularly regarding the relevance of the rule of law. The study is based on an examination of the competition over the production of gold and woodfuel resources comparatively in North Burkina Faso, in the municipality of Séguénéga. The analysis shows that while the rule of law continues to be weak in the production of these resources, the fact that thcompetition over public authority takes place in the field of decentralisation enhances the relevance of statutory frameworks for the governance of resources.

The argument is brought forward through an analysis of the extent to which resource production fits with national legislative frameworks, and in cases when it does not, understanding why. It is argued that the failure of resource formalisation schemes has allowed a diversity of non-state actors to make claims to authority over the production of these resources. When these claims meet with those of local government officials on the ground, they are negotiated on the terrain of decentralisation, providing a field that effectively accommodates overlapping claims. This accommodation is not consensual however and the comparative analysis between gold and woodfuel resources reveals that accommodation is the product of a particular kind of contentious resource politics, one that emerges around the struggle for autonomy vis-à-vis state power, thereby unexpectedly increasing its relevance in the everyday.

Acknowledgments

This PhD project has been a journey up a beautiful but sinuous mountainside.

It would not have been possible without the trust and contribution from generous benefactors. The ESRC provided most of the support, particularly for difficult language training, which gave me the opportunity to do the ethnographic work I had always dreamed of. The contribution of Derek and Maureen Mosse has also been invaluable. Without their support I would have never made it back and forth to the West African bush.

Many thanks to Paul Nugent and Antonio Ioris for accepting to pick up this work half-way up the hill, and for patiently offering valuable comments on tiresome drafts.

A number of colleagues have been valuable road companions. I am grateful to the colleagues at the Sociology Department in Ouagadougou, particularly Pepin Hien, Sylvette Dabiré, Zongo and Somé, for sharing not only crucial insights but also an academic shelter in seemingly homeless times. Special thanks to the number of colleagues from the Responsive Forest Governance Initiative, and to James Murombedzi and Jesse Ribot for putting us all in touch. Exchanges with the RGFI team have opened my eyes to the singularities and typicalities of my fieldwork sites. They were incommensurably instructive detours up the mountain. Many thanks to the postgrads at Edinburgh also, at both Geography and African Studies, but especially to colleagues at Göteborg, for the much valued support towards the late writing phase.

This work could not have gotten together without the time and trust generously offered by many people in Séguénéga and in Ouagadougou. Mammadou Beloum, Boukary Zallé and Madi Ouedraogo in particular provided a valuable map to negotiate the mountainside. Importantly this work would not have been possible had Séguénéga not become a home for me without them. This is also greatly thanks to the generosity and care of Noufou and Estelle. Djami has been a wonderful research companion, and I would not have gotten the insights without her patience and wits. A special thought here to Adama Sawadogo. *May the earth be light above him.*

Enormous thanks to Peikko, Wolfgang, Vilho and to Davide, for making sure that red little engine kept making it round the bends.

My thanks to Andrea Nightingale can hardly be formulated in words. This thesis would not have been completed without her sticking with me when I assured her the map to that mountainside was all wrong. But ‘bird by bird’. Sarah also cannot be thanked enough. Telling me that ‘the Blues ain’t but a good woman feeling bad’ has been more productive than she may ever have imagined.

Enfin, je remercie surtout mam et pap.

Abbreviations

AAM	Authorisation for Artisanal Mining
AGETEER	Agence d'Execution des Travaux en Eau et Equipement Rural
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
BUMIGEB	Bureau des Mines et de la Géologie au Burkina
CAF	Chantier d'Aménagement Forestier (translated as FMU – see below)
CEDL	Comission Environnement et Développement Local
CEMOB	Compagnie d'Exploitation de la Mine d'Or du Burkina
CGCT	Code Général des Colléctivités Territoriales
CBMP	Comptoir Burkinabè des Métaux Précieux
CDP	Congès pour la Démocracie et le Progrès
CDR	Comité de Défense de la Révolution
CFA	Communauté Financière Africaine (Franc)
CILSS	Comité Inter-états contre la Sécheresse dans le Sahel
CNR	Conseil National de la Révolution
CONAPEM	Corporation Nationale des Artisans et Exploitants des Petites Mines du Burkina
COSIC	Comité de Suivi Inter-Communal
CRO	Community Relations Officer
CT	Collectivité Territoriales
CVGT	Conseil Villageois de Gestion des Terroirs
CVD	Comseils Villageois de Développement
Dfid	Department for international development
DIFOR	Diréction des Forêts
ESIA	Environmental and Social Impact Assessment
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organisation
FMC	Forest Management Committee (woodcutter cooperative under FMUs)
FMU	Forest Management Unit
FUC	Forest User Committee
GBP	Great Britain Pounds
GAGF	Groupe de recherché Action sur la Gestion des Forêts
GGF	Groupement de Gestion Forestière
GoB	Government of Burkina Faso
IFAD	International Fund for Agriculture and Development
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
MATDS	Ministère de l'Aménagement du Territoire et de la Sécurité
MEA	Ministère de l'Environnement et de l'Eau
MECV	Ministère de l'Environnement et du Cadre de Vie
MEDD	Ministère de l'Environnement et du Développement Durable
MMCE	Ministère des Mines des Carrières et de l'Energie
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NTFP	Non-Timber Forest Product
OPM	Oxford Policy Management
PCD	Plan Communal de Développement
PNGT	Programme National de Gestion des Terroirs

PRGLA	Programme de Renforcement de la Gouvernance Locale et Administrative
PRIJD/SF	Plan de Réformes Institutionnelles et Juridiques pour la Décentralisation dans le Secteur Forestier
PROFOR	Program on Forests
SG	Secrétaire Général
SOREMIB	Société de Recherche Minière du Burkina
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WTO	World Trade Organisation

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Chapter 1. Introduction

A concern has emerged in recent years about the intensification of resource conflicts in developing societies. These conflicts are often explained as a consequence of incremental factors, such as population growth and environmental abundance of scarcity, but for some time also they have been connected to perceived bad governance. At the heart of concerns over bad governance is the perceived breakdown of the rule of law and the failure of the nation-state to exercise public authority over people and territory. As government-sanctioned institutions are unable to carry out their mandate, the nation-state is perceived to have become less relevant as a form of institutional power, and to give way to so-called weak states (Meagher 2012). Within policy, two important families of initiatives are put forward to address contentious resource politics in a way that increases the relevance of government as an institutional form of power. The first one is the formalisation of local rights over resources, and the second is to 'bring government closer to citizens' through democratic decentralisation reforms. In this thesis I question the extent to which these governmental initiatives contribute to reducing instances of resource-related conflicts. The overarching aim is to shed light on the ways in which these conflicts increase the relevance of the rule of law rather than decrease it. I argue that local governments and local resource producers struggle over the exercise of public authority in relation to resources, and the fact that these struggles take place in the field of decentralisation enhances, rather than decreases, the relevance of statutory frameworks for the governance of resources.

The case study is focused on an enquiry into the exercise of public authority in relation to the production of gold and woodfuel resources in Burkina Faso. The argument brought forward is that resource formalisation schemes have allowed a diversity of non-state actors to make claims to authority over the production of these resources. When these claims meet on the ground, they are negotiated on the terrain of decentralisation, providing a field that effectively accommodates overlapping claims. This accommodation is not consensual however and the comparative analysis between gold and woodfuel resources reveals that accommodation is the product of a particular kind of contentious resource politics, one that emerges around the struggle for autonomy.

My work sits within diverging theoretical claims about the contribution of decentralisation reforms for the dynamics of state formation. Within the field of political ecology in critical geography, some argue on the one hand that decentralisation contributes to the erosion of public oversight over the production of natural resources to the benefit of non-state actors operating at various scales (Swyngedouw 2005, Prudham 2007, Castree 2008, Ferguson and Gupta 2002). Others argue that, as resources and powers have not actually been devolved to local governments, decentralisation reforms actually mask moves towards the re-centralisation of control over natural resources (Ribot, Agrawal, and Larson 2006, Oyono 2004, Ribot and Oyono 2005). Democratic decentralisation reforms are thus understood as a technology of rule (Foucault 2007 [2004]), but it is not clear whose governmental rationality the reform serves. It is presented either as an element of neoliberal state ‘dismantlement’ to the benefit of non-state actors (Larner 2007), or as a ‘repertoire of domination’ that serves to consolidate the material basis of central governments (Poteete and Ribot 2011). I consider these conflicting theoretical statements to reflect a fundamental tension in the way the dynamics of state formation are conceptualised. Instead of arguing for one interpretation over the other, I take this tension to suggest that public authority ought to be posited as an empirical question rather than assuming that its exercise is the prerogative of government agencies (Raeymaekers, Menkhaus, and Vlassenroot 2008). Analysing the dynamics of state formation through the exclusive operation (and performance) of government-sanctioned institutions offers only a partial picture of this dynamic, resulting in contradictory statements.

I draw on a growing body of scholarship that has shown the untenability of *a priori* categories such as legal and illegal, formal and informal. This work encourages a conceptualisation of state formation as a result of negotiation, rather than a product of the imposition of governmental rationality (Hagmann and Peclard 2010). Specifically, negotiation takes places between a variety of *de facto* and *de jure* institutions and over the assertion of public authority, rather than in relations of coercion and consent between government agencies and citizens (Peluso and Lund 2011). The analysis privileges the observation of authority claims, claimants, and their ‘ability to enforce collectively binding actions’ within the context of the production of gold and forest

resources in the everyday (Lund 2006, 767). This conceptualisation brings into focus the role of a number of institutions of power¹ that perform public authority in the everyday – roles that are generally discarded in government-centric analyses. These institutions shape the relevance of government, or governmental technologies of rule – such as decentralisation – by choosing to recognise or ignore them as a valid register to substantiate their claims to authority (Hagmann and Peclard 2010). It is this form of recognition that contributes to shaping the existence, emergence and persistence of the state (Lund 2011b). In such a context, state formation is analysed through the way in which decentralisation contributes to accommodating competing forms of institutional power that have emerged over the production of resources under conditions of weak states. Decentralisation is a government-sanctioned framework, and I argue that the ways in which this reform is appropriated, validated or rejected, give the state its quality, it gives it meaning as a plausible idea, and allows it to persist. It is in this way that it contributes to the dynamics of state building. In order to shed light on the way decentralisation thus contributes to state formation, the central question that this thesis asks is therefore how forms of institutional power emerge and persist under so called ‘weak states’?

I examine this question through an analysis of the emergence and persistence of institutional power over gold and forest resources in Burkina Faso, focusing on the ways institutional forms of power emerge over gold and forest resources, and the way they play out under decentralisation reforms in the commune of Séguénéga in Northern Burkina. The comparative analysis of gold and forest resources also brings scholarship on decentralisation and state formation into new terrain. Patterns emerge in the way institutional forms of power take shape, persist and collide with decentralisation. An analysis of these patterns sheds light on the significance of autonomy as a fundamental principle that is shared and competed over, and gives rise to a particular kind of politics within which competing claims to authority are accommodated under decentralisation. Thus I argue that rather than undermining or enhancing the basis of the state, the very mobilisation of decentralisation around the struggle for autonomy grants relevance to the rule of law, and thereby contributes to the persistence of the Burkinabè state. As such, a study of the politics of autonomy

¹ Taking after Lund (2006: 767) I define institutions of power as individuals and groups that are able to enforce collectively binding decisions over the production of natural resources.

makes a contribution to the ways in which enduring forms of institutional power emerge and persist under conditions of so-called ‘weak state’, and specifically to the ways in which decentralisation contributes to state formation.

Burkina Faso as a case of the struggle for autonomy

Burkina Faso is one of the poorest countries in the world. It has been repeatedly one of the bottom 10 countries on the Human Development Index, and it presents a good context to probe the persistence of so-called weak states. Like many other countries in the developing world, the central government has adopted and rolled out a democratic decentralisation policy since the 1990s that aims to reform statutory administration, particularly at the smallest level of government. The reform was initially implemented on the limited portion of the national space that is most urbanised. The first municipal elections organised in 1995 marked the creation of 49 urban *communes*.² Municipal elections were held again in 2000 in these 49 urban communes, and in 2006 municipal elections extended to the entire territory, seeing the creation of 351 *communes* divided between 302 rural constituencies and the 49 existing urban ones. Decentralisation in Burkina is therefore full-blown, and its significance as a dynamics of state formation in Burkina is not trivial.

At the same time, the poor conditions under which local governments operate in Burkina Faso somewhat undermine this significance. Local governments have been created for a number of years now, but they have been handed over very little power and resources. Central governments have devolved some powers but only in a few sectors namely health, sanitation and education (Dafflon and Madiès 2013). The devolution of central responsibilities to local governments over these sectors aims to increase the efficiency and equity of service delivery but even in these sectors, the

² The term ‘commune’ refers in French, the official language of Burkina Faso, to the territorial unit, or jurisdiction, that is held under the authority of the elected municipal council. These units overlap territorially with earlier ones called ‘*département*’ and which are still under the authority of an appointed state bureaucrat, called the *préfet*. These latter units have been kept so far, but the responsibilities of the *préfet* are gradually decreased. The significance of this overlap is further elaborated on in Chapter Four that tackles the historical continuities and changes in the institutionalisation of local governments in Burkina Faso. Given the significance of this overlap, and the historical situatedness of these institutions of power, I retain the French word to refer to them. This emphasises that I do not make claims about the way decentralisation plays out in different in different national historical contexts.

mandate of local governments remains limited (Ouédraogo et al. 2009, MATD 2010). This state of affairs is not unique to Burkina and indeed in other countries throughout the world the lack of central government support to municipalities is typical of the way these reforms are rolled out in other places (Ribot and Oyono 2005, 2006). This may raise the question as to whether these governments are in fact an empty shell, a nominative rather than a substantive administrative entity, if no actual authority has actually been transferred.

Yet, while the lack of actual devolution may understandably raise suspicions as to the choice of Burkina to examine the role of decentralisation in state formation, the reform is not likely to go away for a number of reasons. Firstly, international donors keen to invest in initiatives promoting ‘good governance’ have poured in funds to support the reform. In addition to bilateral cooperation, particularly with Luxembourg and Scandinavian development cooperation agencies, Burkina has benefitted from significant support by the World Bank to design and implement decentralisation reforms. This started in 1991 with a programme called the *Programme National de Gestion des Terroirs* that was a precursor for decentralisation. The World Bank has mainly funded this programme over a 15 years period, and it aimed at the creation of village-level administrative structures dedicated to implement development interventions. A new five-years phase of this programme was launched in 2013 and brought in the equivalent of 58 million GBP for its implementation.³ On top of this, a new national programme was recently signed for another 15 years period. It brought in the equivalent of 36.5 million GBP that aim to directly support the development of capacities of the newly formed local governments created by decentralisation reforms.⁴ So, while local governments have weak capacity, international donors are making sure that weak central transfers do not put the entire reform into jeopardy and the relevance of local governments is likely to grow in future.⁵

³ See <http://www.lefaso.net/spip.php?article59455>.

⁴ This is the *Programme d’Appui aux Collectivités Territoriales*. (see <http://www.evenement-bf.net/spip.php?article239>).

⁵ Large donor support despite the weak involvement of central government agencies is justified on the grounds that the latter is poor, and that the model devised in Burkina is perceived by donors to be particularly innovative compared to those adopted in other countries (Dafflon and Madiès 2013).

A second reason why the decentralisation reform is not likely to go away is that, while donors mostly drive it, it has already had noticeable effects ‘from below’. Indeed the ways in which it is appropriated remains relatively unexamined. At the national level, the first round of countrywide elections in 2006 mobilised 49% of electors while 75% voted for the second municipal elections that took place in December 2012. None of these have so far challenged the *Congrès pour la Démocratie et le Progrès* (CDP), the political party of the president Blaise Compaoré who has been in power since 1987. It is interesting to note on the other hand that the rate of participation for municipal elections has increased. In fact, the rate of participation at the latest municipal elections was significantly higher than that recorded for the presidential ones held in 2010 (54.9%).⁶ While these figures hide a number of grassroots contestations regarding the legitimacy of these elections, they also indicate that local governments have acquired some meaning for residents under their jurisdiction, and that interactions between rulers and ruled are likely to be relevant. In other words, while the reform is clearly pushed from the outside, it is also being appropriated from below.

At the same time, this presents us with the paradox to try and understand the basis of that popular mobilisation in a context where the mandate of local governments is limited by weak central government endorsement, and where it is mostly devised from the outside.⁷ How, in this context, local governments are able to exercise public authority is therefore an empirical question. One fundamental requirement for the ‘good governance’ agenda to be realised is for these local governments to become economically autonomous by raising their own resources. In Burkina Faso, where the central government is poor and where the majority of people rely on land and other natural resources for a living, one way in which local governments can become autonomous is by raising revenue from the production of natural resources. However natural resources lay at the intersection of a variety of interests across scales, and interfere with local government struggles to become autonomous. Below I suggest

⁶ http://www.ouestaf.com/Presidentielle-au-Burkina-Blaise-fait-un-score-comme-au-bon-vieux-temps-l-opposition-proteste_a3371.html in addition the number electors increased by over 30% in the latest municipal elections compared to the presidential ones in 2010 (<http://lefaso.net/spip.php?article49874>)

⁷ <http://www.hss.de/westafrica/fr/burkina-faso/sujets/les-elections-couplees-au-burkina-faso-2012.html>

that gold and woodfuel resources are a good lens to study the intersection of public authority, decentralisation and state formation.

Natural resources as a lens: competing institutions of power in Burkina Faso

In Burkina Faso, the majority of the population resides outside cities, and natural resources provide the livelihood basis for most citizens. It is estimated that 86% of the active population relies directly on natural resources for their livelihoods, cross-cutting the agricultural, forestry and pastoral sectors, wherefrom around 40% of the GDP is produced (MECV 2007). The agricultural sector comprises a large share of that production, but it is also one of the least developed in the entire continent. Once a largely family-based subsistence farming economy, the agricultural sector has greatly diversified in the last couple of decades and some of the most significant evolutions are towards the individualisation and monetisation of farming, as well as an increasing monetisation of livelihoods both on and off-farm (Bryceson 2000, Scoones 2009). This means that while the majority of the population continues to farm the land for a living, they also seek to engage in cash generating activities from the production of natural resources but beyond agriculture, and the production of gold and woodfuel resources are important for maintaining the basis of local livelihoods.

Gold and woodfuel are both produced on a small scale in Burkina. On the one hand, these resources offer good opportunities for local governments to become autonomous, through taxation. On the other hand, their ability to raise revenue from the production of these resources also depends on the taxation powers they are devolved in these sectors. So far, these have been typically poor: there are no revenue-sharing provisions between central and local governments in place in the small-scale mining sector. With regards to woodfuel, legal provisions were drafted in 2006 for local governments to be able to raise revenues over small-scale production but they were not voted yet so that local governments are still unable to raise resources from the production of woodfuel (MECV 2006).

While this lack of fiscal transfer is often interpreted as a ‘repertoire of domination’ (Poteete and Ribot 2011) it must also be cast in relation to the kinds of revenues that

the central government is *able* to raise in these sectors. On the one hand, the capacity of the central government to raise revenues from the small-scale production of gold and woodfuel has generally been poor because a majority of this production occurs at the margins of legal frameworks. On the other hand, the central government receives a large share of revenues in the mining and forestry sectors from external investors in the mining and the development industries. This has given rise to quite similar configurations of institutional power over gold and forest resources in Burkina Faso.

Institutions of power over gold resources

Gold resources have been discovered in Burkina for a long time, but they have only started to be produced since the mid-1980s. At that time not mining legislation existed so a parastatal institution was created (*Comptoir Burkinabè des Métaux Précieux*), within which civil servants were trained and sent to rural areas to organise small-scale gold production. This institution has now disappeared, but gold digging continues to have grown in importance and has expanded mostly on the margins of statutory frameworks even though nowadays gold mining is governed under a Mining Code (1997, 2003).

In 2009, gold mining became the first export product and the sector now holds a significant share of the national economy. Like many other countries in the Sahel the economy of Burkina Faso is export-led. For a long time, raw cotton produced in Burkina was by and large the most important export product, but in 2010 gold outranked it as first export commodity, and this has mostly been driven by a boom in the industrial mining sub-sector.

Like in many other places the mining sector, is divided between a domestic and largely informal small-scale economy, and an industrial subsector mostly driven by foreign investors. The central government generates most gold mining public resources from the industrial sector. The rest is generated through a very small fraction of formalised small-scale mining, generally referred to as artisanal mining.

There is no reliable national statistic available for the disaggregated mining sector because the majority of small-scale gold mining is undertaken without a license and without paying taxes. In this context, it is therefore difficult to quantify the number of people involved and the size of revenue generated through this activity. Some broad figures can be invoked here however to give a sense of the comparative significance of the small-scale and large-scale sub-sectors. A recent report estimated that around 95% of state revenue generated through mining comes from this nascent industrial sector (ITIE 2012, 22).⁸ The remaining 5% are brought in by a small number of legally sanctioned artisanal mining concessions. In 2009 the Minister of Mining claimed that around 700,000 people benefitted directly from small-scale mining, which represents 10% of the active population (Mégret 2010, 290). These figures are estimates, most likely conservative ones, and include both legally and non-legally sanctioned activities, so they do not inform us about state revenue from small-scale mining. Industrial mining was close to non-existent until 2007 when the first industrial open-pit gold mine opened in the North of the country. Since then, seven additional ones were built, and all of them are owned by foreign investors.

The significance of external contributions is reflected in the way the central government engages local governments in the mining sector. The only fiscal transfer that local governments are allowed is a share of the superficiary tax paid by industrial mining investors, but no revenue-sharing provisions are in place in the small-scale mining sector. With regards to the largely informal small-scale mining sector, some loose provisions have been made for local governments to create taxes locally, but this is left entirely to their discretion.

In this sense, the struggle for local government autonomy must be cast in relation to the question of ‘illegal’ small-scale resource production that the central government is not able to benefit from. Indeed while they are not *de jure* authorised to raise revenue from small-scale production, the fact that they are prompted to be autonomous and the fact that small-scale gold production has generated important wealth means that small-scale gold production and the struggle for local government autonomy are strongly entangled. At the same time, local governments are *de jure* transferred the

⁸ In 2009, CFAFrancs 10.7 billion (GBP 130 million) were generated through these taxes.

possibility to benefit from gold production in the large-scale sub sector and in a context where the industrial and small-scale sectors compete, understanding what institutions of power are able to persist and endure under decentralisation is a significant question.

Institutions of power over woodfuel resources

The share of woodfuel production within national economic growth is not as significant as that of mining in Burkina Faso. Forest resources are also governed by different legal frameworks, but the configuration of institutional power involved in the governance of woodfuel is somewhat similar to that of gold.

There are multiple ways in which dry forests form the basis of subsistence in Burkina Faso. The production of forest resources is mostly divided between timber, woodfuel and non-timber forest products. Given that Burkina Faso is mostly situated in the Soudano-Sahelian drylands, trees are scarce and woodfuel production is undertaken on a small scale. However woodfuel is significant for the national economy as it represents 85% of the wealth generated in the forestry sector . This is understandable since woodfuel is the main source of domestic energy in Burkina Faso. In 2001, it was estimated that 84.4% of people relied on wood for domestic fuel. This also means that the production of woodfuel occupies large parts of the population. In 2012 the woodfuel sector generated CFA 209 billion (GBP 256 000) thus representing 5,6% of the GDP as well as employing around 60,000 people formally (MEDD 2011).

The woodfuel sector also generates rents for the Ministry of Environment, and the central government more widely, received from donors in the development industry, particularly in ‘forest management’ schemes that aim to improve the way woodfuel is produced.⁹ The contribution from donors largely outweighs revenues gathered from the taxes generated in the woodfuel sector. In 2004 woodfuel taxes and permit fees generated CFA 250 million (GBP 303,000) for the central government (MEDD

⁹ The reason for bringing this expression into brackets is not to undermine the significance of these interventions in practice, but rather to emphasise the fact that the extent to which the actual management of forest is what these interventions achieve is socially constructed, as has been demonstrated by numerous work so far in the field of political ecology (Nightingale 2006).

2011)).¹⁰ In comparison, the economic allocations coming from external donors in the forest sector are difficult to quantify because they are attributed across a variety of ministerial departments operating at different governmental levels, and it is difficult to disaggregate the part allocated to the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development for improving woodfuel production (Dié 2011, 35). An indication of the significance of these rents can be approximated however. In 2010 it was estimated that the Ministry of Environment implemented around 30 programmes, the majority of which were funded externally. By aggregating the fund allocations coming from only four of these main projects, we arrive at a sum of around CFA 30 billion (GBP 36 million).¹¹ This only represents a small fraction of rents received by the government in the forestry sector, and yet it clearly outweighs revenues generated through small-scale woodfuel production.

There are no clear revenue-sharing provisions between central and local governments as yet; however there is a national plan for the ‘decentralisation of forest management’. It has scarcely been implemented, but recently a number of donors have become involved in putting it into practice. Since development aid is not classified as public revenue *stricto sensu*, it is difficult to trace the rents allocated to local governments by international development institutions. However, in the absence of revenue-sharing from woodfuel production, aid resources constitute a greater part of local government resources than woodfuel production.

Competing claims: the struggle for autonomy

The picture that starts to emerge from the account above is one of comparable political economic configurations across the two sectors, but also one of competing interests. The production of gold and woodfuel resources lays at the intersection of the interests of a variety of overlapping institutions of power, namely the central and local governments, local producers and global actors from the mining and development industry respectively, and these actors compete in similar ways.

On the one hand, the production of small-scale gold and woodfuel resources

¹⁰ This is expected to have risen only moderately since then, as the commercial demand for woodfuel has increase along with urbanisation.

¹¹ This is calculated based on published information on current projects listed in MEDD (2012, 45-46).

constitutes an important basis of local livelihoods but it bears little significance for the material basis of both central and local governments. On the other hand, the revenues generated in the mining and forestry sectors for government mostly come from the contributions made by external investors from the mining or the development industry respectively.¹² A corollary of this is that by virtue of their significance within the national economy, these external investors are also able to lay authority claims over the way gold and forest resources ought to be produced. However the resource claims of small-scale producers and external investors often compete.

This is quite clear in the mining sector where large-scale mining projects are often established in places where existing small-scale gold production takes place. In such cases, both industrial and small-scale activities rarely coexist, and indeed industrial projects often result in the loss of access to gold resources for small-scale producers. This is true in Burkina as well as in many other places throughout the world (Bebbington 2012).

In the forestry sector, the competition between development industry investors and small-scale woodfuel producers is a little less clear, but no less significant. For decades now woodfuel production has been portrayed as the root cause of deforestation and land degradation in the Sahel but also in other places throughout the world (Verdeaux 1999). As a result international environmental development interventions have focused on the roll-out of initiatives that seek to contain small-scale woodfuel production. These range from localised initiatives into wood-saving cooking technologies, to much wider national community forestry programmes that aim to re-organise the small-scale sector but often result in the marginalisation of small-scale producers to the benefit of bureaucratic and commercial elites in these sectors (Nightingale 2005, Ribot 2009). On the ground therefore these programmes

¹² This situation is not unique to Burkina and indeed is a phenomenon that has been referred to as 'extraversion' by J.-F. Bayart and followers to describe the strategies employed by African governments to deal with the structural and contradictory condition of African nations that are 'at once dependent and under-exploited' (Bayart 1990). The work presented here does not make a particular theoretical point in relation to extraversion. However the phenomenon of extraversion is taken seriously as a structuring factor of the conditions under which governments and citizens engage one another. In fact here I use the theoretical developments of Bayart exactly the way he intended them that is '*de proposer un mode de raisonnement et d'analyse, d'esquisser un paradigme susceptible d'aider à des monographies et des comparaisons ultérieures*' (Bayart 1989, 12).

often have to confront the competing vision of small-scale woodcutters.

What is relevant here the fact that local governments are more likely to become autonomous from revenues generated through the investments of mining and development industry actors rather than from small-scale producers. The relation between overlapping institutions of power over the production of gold and forest resources in Burkina therefore offer a rich lens to understanding the struggle for local government autonomy. In turn, the relations between overlapping and competing institutions of power around this struggle informs us about the way decentralisation contributes to dynamics of state formation in Burkina Faso.

The case of Séguénéga

The study presented here focuses on the appropriation and mobilisation of decentralisation in the commune of Séguénéga in Northern Burkina. This choice is motivated by an interest in the exercise of public authority as it is performed in the everyday, rather than through the exclusive operation of legal frameworks and advocacies from above. In addition, tensions between different institutions of power operating at different scales are not always immediately apparent when seen exclusively from above, whereas studying the way they overlap and compete in a single place and over single piece of resource brings them to light. An extended case study of relations of authority over gold and woodfuel resources in Séguénéga sought to generate insights into the emergence and endurance of forms of institutional power under conditions of weak states, and an analysis of the relation between these institutions of power aims to contribute an understanding about the ways in which decentralisation contributes to state formation. The commune of Séguénéga offers a good context to study the struggle for autonomy of a local government.

Firstly Séguénéga is a rural commune. It is situated in North Burkina, in the province of Yatenga (Figure 1), and it counts around 70,000 inhabitants. Rural communes lend the most striking insights into the tension between local and central governments in Burkina. In 2007 the resources available to all regional and communal governments created under the decentralisation reform represented only 6% of the national budget,

and within that small share only 6% were transferred to rural communes (Champagne and Ouedraogo 2008). In places like Séguénéga, local governments are under particular pressure to become autonomous and this brings tensions that unfold around resource governance to light.

At the same time, national figures indicate that rural communes have been relatively autonomous. If national statistics are anything to go by, in 2009, their financial resources were derived from three main sources: 20% came from external contributions (national and international donors), 37% came from central government transfers and 43% represented the part that municipalities were able to raise themselves (GoB 2010). This indicates that while rural municipal councils are under more pressure to become autonomous than urban ones, they have not ‘frozen in the their tracks’ and they do undertake initiatives towards greater ‘autonomisation’.

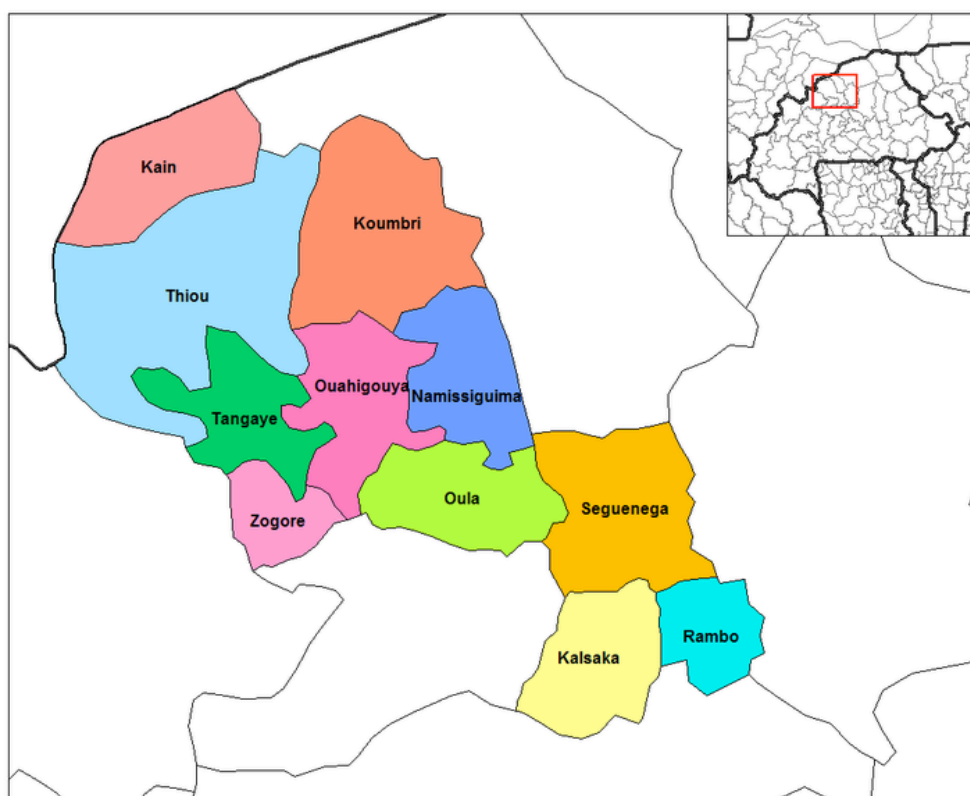


Figure 1. The commune of Séguénéga within the Province of Yatenga in North Burkina Faso (source: google.maps)

The commune of Seguenega offers a good context to observe competition of authority over the production of gold and woodfuel for a number of reasons. Firstly, the

agroecological situation means that the stakes for accessing woodfuel and gold are relatively high for local dwellers. The commune of Séguénéga is situated in the soudano-sahelian zone of Burkina Faso that receives on average 600mm of rainfall per year, distributed over the rainy season that stretches across the months of June to October. Like in the rest of the country, the majority of inhabitants in Séguénéga rely on family-based agriculture that takes place in the rainy season. In the north of Burkina, people mostly cultivate millet, sorghum, corn, black eyed-bean, peanut and sesame. These crops are mostly used for subsistence but also sometimes for cash too. While a majority of residents farm for a living, agroecological conditions have become increasingly unfavourable, and people also engage in a number of on and off-farm activities to complement farm work. These activities include husbandry of small and big ruminants as well as poultry, and vegetable gardening in the dry season that includes the cultivation of tomatoes, cabbage, and onions in areas that are close to water sources. In addition to these, two cash-generating activities in the area, small-scale gold digging and the commercialisation of woodfuel also generate cash.

Small-scale gold digging is the activity that occupies most residents in Séguénéga. It is undertaken on a small-scale and the activity is unregulated by official authorities. People have engaged the activity since the mid-1980s at a time when a series of violent droughts repeatedly hit the Sahel. At that time, inhabitants in Séguénéga were introduced to organised gold-digging by more experienced diggers coming from the Delgodje further North, where gold extraction had a longer history. Residents in Séguénéga remember selling nuggets of gold for what appears to be now very little money but constituted important amounts then to help them palliate crop failure induced by droughts. Since then, the significance of gold digging has never ceased to grow in Séguénéga.

Wood is also an important way to generate cash; it is the main source of fuel. Only a small minority of residents use gaz cookers and woodfuel is therefore an important resource, but it is not produced on a large-scale. The production of woodfuel is also less significant than gold digging for people's livelihoods. Séguénéga is situated in the North of the country where tree cover is not dense, so woodfuel is only extracted on a small scale. Many people collect firewood for domestic use, and this part is not

commercialised. The commercial production of woodfuel is mostly collected within the perimeter of the municipality and it is sold either in Séguénéga, the municipal capital, or neighbouring bigger villages. Most of those who engage in the commercialisation of woodfuel are not professionally trained. Many engage in the production of woodfuel as a dry season cash-generating activity, and they may not pursue this activity all year round, but rather engage in it in times of need. There are also a handful of professional woodcutters and retailers whose main activity is the production and commercialisation of woodfuel but like in many other places in Burkina they often operate without a professional licence and do not always purchase the woodcutting permit that is required by law. This is quite typical of woodfuel production in the rest of Burkina where forest law enforcement is weak.

The gold-woodfuel nexus is complex and has not been researched in detail. On the one hand, the commercial production of woodfuel has become a lesser attractive option since the intensification of gold digging, which is a much more attractive activity. On the other hand it seems that since gold digging activities intensified in Séguénéga, so has the collection and commercialisation of woodfuel. Gold digging has attracted a large number of migrants in the area, and has required an important additional number of mouths needing fed which may indicate a more intense production of woodfuel since gold digging expanded. As such, small-scale gold digging and woodfuel extraction are both activities that occupy a certain number of people in the commune of Séguénéga and these resources could present taxation opportunities in the commune of Séguénéga.

Secondly, Séguénéga is a good context to study the resource-authority nexus under decentralisation because in addition to small-scale producers, the local government can also benefit from gold and forest production from the large-scale mining industry and from the development industry respectively. In the case of gold resources, the commune of Séguénéga has recently seen the construction of a large-scale industrial mining project that begun in 2013. Before this project started, mining exploration activities were undertaken since 1996 by a succession of different national and international large-scale mining companies. Exploration work has taken place in areas where unregistered small-scale mining also takes place and as such the resource

claims of external investors and small-scale gold diggers have overlapped for a long time in Séguénéga. This case lends itself to an analysis of insights into competing resource claims between overlapping institutions of power over the production of gold resources, and to the ways that the relevance of statutory frameworks are transformed under decentralisation.

In the case of forest resources, the commune of Séguénéga is currently benefitting from a donor-funded project carried out by an environmental International Non-Governmental Institution (NGO) that aims to implement the national ‘forest decentralisation’ plan drafted by the central government and donors (MECV 2006). This intervention started in 2008 and it is a pioneer in Burkina because while the plan was drafted in 2006, it was never carried out by either governmental agencies or donors in practice before. The initiative is being implemented by the INGO in eight communes throughout Burkina. In Séguénéga, two forest areas are targeted to become ‘municipal forests’ and in these areas, multiple institutions of power compete and overlap in ways that allow to study the resource-authority nexus under decentralisation.

In this context, the production of gold and forest resources lay at the intersection of a variety of interests namely local producers, central and local governments, and investors from the mining and development industries respectively. As such, Séguénéga offers a rich case to explore the way competing claims to resources play out, and the ways in which the appropriation of the decentralisation reform in this context shapes the relevance of the rule of law. The embedded cases and their resonance shed light on the significance of the co-production of resource and authority under decentralisation, which in turn contributes an understanding to the way enduring forms of institutional power emerge and persist under conditions of weak state.

Layout of the thesis

In the Chapter following this introduction I lay out the theoretical scope of the study within the disciplines of geography and anthropology, and propose a conceptual

framework for making sense of durable institutional power under weak states through the co-production of resources and authority. The theoretical discussion starts with a political ecological critique of normative environmental governance conceptualisations of authority, which I then situate within a more critical debate within work on the contributions of decentralisation to state formation. I begin by reviewing a governmentality critique of neo-institutional approaches to decentralisation, which make the argument that localising government is a technique of government. At the same time, governmentality approaches also shed light on the fact that governmental rationalities are not homogeneous and technologies of rule are mobilised and appropriated by a variety of institutions of power with diverging objectives. In this sense, it remains unclear whose governmental rationalities are being supported through the scaling down of environmental governance. I show that this tension is clear from diverging theoretical statements about the way decentralisation contributes to state formation in geography. Drawing on anthropological approaches to state formation I propose rather to frame the enquiry over the way in which decentralisation contributes to enhancing the relevance of the rule of law. This framing encourages positing the exercise of public authority empirically, rather than trying to determine whose governmental rationality is advanced through decentralisation.

Drawing on these approaches, a conceptual framework is proposed as a way to turn the governmentality approach on its head. Three concepts are advanced to understand the co-production of resources and authority under decentralisation. Firstly, resource regulation mediates the resource-authority nexus, but instead of looking for the ways that resource regimes make resource producers legible, I analyse the forms of institutional power that emerge within and outside statutory frameworks regulating the production of gold and forest resources. Secondly, relations of recognition also mediate the resource-authority nexus in important ways. Unlike governmentality approaches that qualify the relation between states and citizens as a dialectic between coercion and consent, here I emphasise the significance of recognition. A number of overlapping forms of institutional power emerge within the interstice between compliance to, and enforcement of, statutory regulation. These relations give rise to institutions of power over gold and forest resources that endure over time. The third

concept that helps conceptualise the resource-authority nexus under decentralisation, and more broadly the emergence and persistence of institutional power under weak states, is the notion of political field as it is defined by Bourdieu (1981). Rather than a technology of rule, decentralisation is approached as one among other political fields. As such, state formation is not an outcome of either the imposition or the internalisation of decentralisation as a project of rule imposed from above, but rather an effect of the way it collides with overlapping political fields.

Chapter Three presents the methodological approach undertaken to carry out this study. The first part of the Chapter focuses on the way the embedded case study design mobilised the concepts outlined above, specifically through an approach that ‘follows the policy from below’. The second half of the Chapter pays particular attention to the sources of data used and the ways they helped me to ‘see’ public authority over gold and forest resources in Séguénéga. The last part of the Chapter focuses on the analysis of patterns across the embedded units (gold and forest), as well as the limitations of the study.

Chapter Four gives some historical background to decentralisation, but it is not simply descriptive. It articulates the concept of political field in the empirical context, and demonstrates the significance of autonomy in relation to democratic decentralisation in Burkina Faso. I develop this argument through a history of continuities and changes in local administration since the colonial era. The account draws attention to the fact that autonomy is what distinguishes the current decentralisation reform from earlier forms of local administration in Burkina Faso, and this is true in two ways: firstly, I show that the implementation of democratic decentralisation in the 1990s has created a ‘democratic’ political field that is distinct from the ‘bureaucratic’ and the ‘customary’ fields through which local administration had ruled until then. The second significance of autonomy somewhat derives from the first: the three political fields overlap under decentralisation and one way in which local governments distinguish themselves is through their ability to become financially autonomous from central government. I demonstrate this through the perceived imperative in Séguénéga for the local government to become autonomous.

Chapter Five turns specifically to the governance of gold and forest resources. One perceived characteristic of weak states is the co-existence of legal and illegal activities because state rule is not able to reach out over the entire national space. The Chapter analyses the statutory regulatory frameworks that underlie the emergence of this institutional form in relation to the production of gold and woodfuel resources in Burkina. I show that the co-existence of legal and illegal activities is a product of two unintended institutional effects of regulatory frameworks: Firstly, statutory regulation over gold and woodfuel resources has created a space for government-sanctioned but non-state actors to engage in the regulation of these resources. These government-sanctioned institutions are artisanal mining concession in the case of gold resources, and community-based woodfuel concessions in the case of forest resources. A second effect of regulatory changes is that in each case, in resource concessions public authority is exercised over the production of resources but it is not deployed evenly across national space. Where concessions do not exist, producers enjoy greater autonomy over production vis-a-vis government-sanction that is either absent, as in the case of gold, or partial, as in the case for woodfuel. This Chapter therefore develops a second aspect of autonomy that characterises the relation between resource producers and government under conditions of weak states.

If government sanction is mostly felt within resource concessions, how is public authority exercised where they are either absent? Chapter Six examines this question through the concept of recognition. It zooms in onto the exercise of public authority over gold and forest resources in Séguénéga where resource production can be characterised as more autonomous from government sanction. I examine empirically the kinds of institutional forms that emerge through an analysis of vertical and horizontal relations of recognition that produce them. In the case of gold, there is no small-scale mining concession in Séguénéga, but government-sanctioned institutions are not totally absent and neither is small-scale mining anarchic. Rather, a small group of small-scale miners, which I call ‘shaft owners’, have emerged out of the mutual recognition of non-government sanctioned (lineage holders, gold diggers) and government-sanctioned (préfet, police) institutions. I show that shaft owners have been able to sustain public authority over the small-scale production of gold resources as a result. In the case of woodfuel, the kinds of relations of recognition that give rise

to institutions of power are different but comparable. While there is no community-based woodfuel concession in Séguénéga, the local state forest agent is the authority in charge of organising woodfuel production, but his capacities are poor. In this context a small number of individuals, whom I call '*tiis nanamse*', or 'lords of the trees', have stepped up to improve oversight over woodfuel production. *Tiis nanamse* emerge as an institution of power through the mutual recognition of the forest agent and customary authorities and woodcutters. The ways in which these forms of institutional power emerge is different across gold and forest resources, but in each case an analysis relations of recognition helps to make them visible and to understand how they are maintained over time. I mobilise the concept of 'twilight institutions' to qualify them because the term highlights one characteristic that is common across the two cases, and which is that the public authority they are able to exercise is partial and contested, and in order to maintain their authority they rely upon the further mutual recognition between government and non-government institutions of power.

Chapters Seven and Eight operationalise the concept of field to show how recognition dynamics this search for recognition collides with the decentralisation reform in Séguénéga in a way that enhances the relevance of the rule of law. Theoretically, the last two Chapters make a point to turn governmentality approach on its head: far from becoming subjectified to (Agrawal 2005), or evading (Scott 2009) the imposition of governmental rationality, resource users appropriate this 'technology of rule' to suit their own purpose. Importantly, this means that they are not 'subjected' to this project of rule but necessitate it to enhance their authority. These Chapters tackle this question showing how the kind of politics that plays out in the democratic field, and 'in the name of decentralisation' is articulated around the struggle for autonomy, which contributes to enhancing the rule of law.

In Chapter Seven, I examine the ways in which shaft owners become enrolled in the democratic field and the kind of politics that plays out as they are so. Shaft owners appropriate the democratic field by becoming municipal councillors themselves and undertaking elaborate arrangements within their villages in the name of decentralisation. This enrolment of shaft owners places them in opposition with municipal councillors who have also come to claim taxes over the small-scale

production of gold resources overseen by shaft owners, and to which the latter are not willing to contribute. The democratic field is characterised then by fragmented local politics articulated around the struggle for autonomy. The latter part of the Chapter mobilises the concept of field further to show how this politics manifests in dynamics of state-building. This is illustrated through a case of the tensions that emerge between shaft owners and an international large-scale mining company that claims access to gold resources over an area where the shaft owners also work. As shaft owners, they will lose the benefits over gold, but as municipal councillors, they might not lose it all. By virtue of their enrolment in the democratic field, and in view of the politics underlying the democratic field shaft owners make claims to become a commune, independent from that of Séguénéga, which results in enhancing the rule of law.

Chapter Eight also illustrates the operation of the politics of autonomy in a case of contested access to forest resources in the name of decentralisation in Séguénéga. In this case, *Tiis nanamse* become enrolled in the democratic field through an externally funded ‘decentralised forest governance’ project that turns them into a ‘Forest Management Committee’. This enrolment serves to strengthen their authority, and because *tiis nanamse* are recognised by customary authorities, it also customary politics within the democratic field. At the same time, the enrolment of *tiis nanamse* generates tensions within the democratic field, specifically bringing them and municipal councillors as competing actors claiming benefits that can be generated from the ‘municipal forests’. The enrolment of *tiis nanamse* thereby enhances the relevance of the democratic field and the customary field, which come into competition with one another. In order to illustrate the way this tension contributes to state-building, I draw on a conflict that emerges between *tiis nanamse* and municipal authorities over the struggle for autonomy, which results in the fixation of a new statutory boundary within the commune of Séguénéga, and thereby shows how the politics of autonomy, under decentralisation, contributes to state formation.

The last Chapter concludes the thesis by bringing together a series of key empirical insights that have been generated through the question asked. I summarise the ways in which this question has been answered and the relevance of the concepts mobilised to

shed light on the way decentralisation contributes to state formation in Burkina Faso. It concludes on two notes about the contribution of politics, and autonomy in two bodies of literature namely, the politics of scale in geography, and the politics of belonging in anthropology, and points to area of further research at the intersection of democracy and the production of natural resources that may further enhance our understanding of state-building dynamics on developing societies.

Chapter 2. Decentralisation and natural resource production

In order to make sense of the conditions under which forms of institutional power emerge and endure under conditions of so-called weak states, I draw from two bodies of scholarship. The first one spans critical geographical literature on nature-society dialectics that has emerged from the field of political ecology broadly defined. This field takes a political economic approach to the way institutions mediate natural resource production and informs us about the political economic significance of decentralisation in developing societies. A second body of scholarship that this thesis draws upon is anthropological work that is more directly concerned with questions of state formation. This work spans political geography and area studies and it has grown in response to narratives of state failure, state deficiency and state roll-back. At its core is a concern with understanding the paradox whereby in a context of clear failure, nation-states persist both materially and symbolically as appropriate frames of reference to organise natural resource production and public services distribution. Together these two strands of scholarship give some important conceptual elements that I mobilise to frame this study on the exercise of public authority over the production of natural resources, and on the contribution of decentralisation to the persistence of so-called 'weak' nation-states.

The first part of this literature review brings together insights from these literatures. It starts with a discussion of decentralisation as a form of 'governmentality'. This approach captures the tensions described in Chapter One around the relation between decentralisation, resources and authority. More specifically, a review of work within this approach shows that to understand the role that decentralisation plays in dynamics of state formation, we must pay attention to regulation, and question state logics underlying regulation. At the same time it also shows that state logics are only deployed partially. Not only do regulatory frameworks rarely have the effect that they set out to achieve, government is also only partially able to enforce regulatory frameworks. As such, while resource regulation is able to classify resource producers as 'good or bad' producers, it is not necessarily able to impose its rule fully over either. So while seeing decentralisation as a form of 'governmentality' gives insights into the different categories of producers that are produced through government regulation, in order to understand the ability of local governments to exercise public authority over the production of natural resources we must turn governmentality on its

head: instead of looking at the way technologies of rule are imposed, we must also look at the way they are appropriated in the everyday. This question has been better handled by work in social anthropology, on ‘negotiated statehood’ for example (Hagmann and Péclard 2011). This work shows that the exercise of public authority must be understood within the gaps between policy advocacies and practice. More specifically it shows that instituted forms of authority emerge within this gap as rulers and rules try to render state logics practical, and these institutions are those that local governments have to deal with in the everyday.

Beyond institutional design: from governance to governmentality

The largest volume of literature produced on decentralisation and natural resource governance developed out of the work done on the management of common property resources in the 1990s. It is important to review it briefly here for this reason, but also because it provides a point of entry into a more critical discussion on the relation between decentralisation, resources and authority.

The pioneering work of Elinor Ostrom on the management of common property resources has been very influential in this literature. It was originally concerned with refuting the ‘tragedy of the commons’ thesis (Ostrom 1990). This thesis argues that common property resources need to be enclosed and privatised in order for natural resource production to be sustainable in the long run. The work of Ostrom and her followers demonstrated that on the contrary, the absence of centralised or private property does not systematically lead to political anarchy and environmental depletion. They argue that given the right institutional design, common property regimes can deliver equitable and sustainable resource use. For this reason, the main concern underlying this body of work has been to uncover institutional design principles that shape outcomes in terms of the social distribution of economic benefits and the spatial distribution of resource use.

While this work has been very influential in resource governance policy, it has also been criticised. It has been significant in promoting the view that decentralisation is a promising ‘institutional design’ for equitable natural resource management. Various

reasons are advanced in favour of decentralisation. For example localising resource management is seen to yield more appropriate resource use rules, and more accountable forms of government since those being ruled can more easily control the decisions and actions of local than central governments (Agrawal and Ostrom 2001). At the same time, this work has been heavily criticised by resource geographers for its narrow methodological individualistic underpinnings typical of neo-institutional approaches to nature-society relations, and by implications to the resource-authority nexus. Neo-institutionalism is characterised here by two over-arching theoretical commitments: firstly an understanding that agency results from the rational choices of individuals and secondly an understanding that institutions operate through the aggregation of these choices (Cleaver 2000, Rangan 1997). Fundamentally, neo-institutional framings assume that the creation of formal institutions inevitably translates into authority, if the aggregated preferences of individuals are sufficiently well represented under that institution. Geographers in the field of political ecology have criticised the focus on 'getting the institutions right' for being based on the dubious neo-institutionalist assumption that relations of natural production can be engineered institutionally, by design (Nightingale 2011).

This theoretical framing therefore is seen as being too prescriptive, too normative because it assesses the performance of the reform according to pre-set normative criteria (of good or bad outcomes), which are inherently constructed and contested socially. Fundamentally, common property approaches are critiqued for relying on rational economic choice framings that tend to reify the 'community' as an aggregation of economic agents, and fails to recognise that such 'community' is not homogeneous. In other words, while some members may consider certain outcomes as positive, others will not, and economic motives are not always at the core of their misalignment (Larson and Soto 2008). This issue is highly relevant in the context of this study where the governance of woodfuel and gold resources includes a diversity of actors and producers who compete over resource production and are aligned differently vis-a-vis government.

The concept of governmentality has been mobilised to try and explain how a uniform body of rule, such as the state, or governmental policies like decentralisation,

manages to 'discipline' overlapping and competing interests in resource (Bakker and Bridge 2008). The questions that this concept tries to resolve are how and why governmental schemes continue to be adopted even when they go against the interests of some resource producers? How are these negative effects justified, and how do they come to be accepted by those who are affected by them? Here I will focus in a little more depth on a couple of influential pieces within the work that pays attention to decentralisation and draws on governmentality and associated concepts to shed light on the conditions under which public authority over natural resource production emerges under decentralisation.

Governmentality framings advance the overall argument that decentralisation operates as a technology of rule, an 'art of government' that is not aimed at 'improving livelihoods' but at 'disciplining population', making resource use practices 'legible' and therefore governable (Foucault 2007 [2004], Rose, O'Malley, and Valverde 2006). Some argue for example that decentralisation produces willing environmental subjects by rendering government 'intimate', by localising rule-making over natural resource production like forests (Agrawal 2005). Others have strived for a more complex governmentality analytic arguing that subjectification operates through existing social differences, such as gender, class and caste, rather than through supposedly inherent state/subject antagonisms (Nightingale 2005). These insights demonstrate the importance of understanding the specific contexts in which public authority is exercised.

In addition, and seen in the light of an art of government, decentralisation is a 'community-making' device that serves the creation of 'governable spaces' (Watts 2004). In other words, the 'community' that is created under decentralisation would not exist if it were not for the need of the state and other development related interventions to be able mobilise it (Peluso 2005, Hagberg 2010). In the context of the study, this suggests that we examine not only social and political differences on the ground but also social and power relations between different actors and rationalities of resource production across scales.

At the same time, this work also emphasises that there are important tensions between those who mobilise ‘communities’. Tania Li (2007) for example emphasises the importance of the ‘will to improve’ as the main common denominator across a range of generic discourses and practices across scales, which assemble a wide range of interests over governmental approaches to natural resource production. Decentralisation here is seen as a way of ‘grafting new elements onto the assemblage, reworking existing elements for new purposes’ (2007: 284). However she also points out that paying attention to this ‘reworking’ reveals tensions among those who mobilise communities; for example, in the case of donor-funded forest management schemes in Indonesia, she shows that donors may emphasise that powers and resources to manage forest should be devolved to local governments, while central forest bureaucracies are often unwilling to give up such powers. Her work shows that government rationality is not monolithic, and ought to be the object of careful scrutiny.

This is relevant in the context of forest resource management in Burkina Faso where a reform has been drafted but has never been implemented due to this tension between donors who try to push the reform forward and central government that is reluctant to do so (Ribot 2010). It is also clear in the case of gold production where the central administration advocates that ‘community consultations’ with mining investors be conducted through local governments, while investors sometimes prefer to conduct these consultations through customary authorities, assuming this grants more legitimacy to the consultation process (Luning 2008b). In this sense while decentralization contributes to creating governable spaces where a wide range of different local interests are made uniform, it is not clear who actually governs these spaces and where the power to govern is located.

One important question that this ‘misalignement’ raises specifically is for whom are the governable spaces created under decentralised destined to be? Whose governmental rationality do they serve? Whose authority is being extended over the production of natural resources under decentralisation? Is it that of central government, donors or foreign mining investors? The question being raised here is one of sovereignty, and is relevant to this study where donors exert some claims of

authority over the governance of forest resources and where international mining investors do the same over gold resources. We have seen in this introduction that the material interests of the state lay more distinctly with those of international donors and with industrial mining investors, which tend to compete with those of small-scale producers. However one important question that needs to be asked is how this alignment is legitimised in the everyday, and how local governments deal with this challenge of legitimisation at the interface between state and society.

The question of whose governmental rationality is being advanced through decentralisation has been preoccupying much of the political ecological research over the last two decades, but it has also generated a divided scholarship between those who consider that decentralisation reforms either erode or expand the power of government over the production of natural resources. Both arguments are formulated within the broadly defined field of political ecology, and their contradictory nature is developed below.

Whose governmental rationality? A divided political economic scholarship

Political ecology covers a vast array of work undertaken since the 1990s around questions of the co-production of nature and society. While it has evolved into a varied and rich field, one enduring and unifying theoretical commitment has been to bring to light the political economic factors that mediate nature-society relations. In this work some attention has therefore been paid over understanding who benefits from decentralisation, and public authority is mostly conceptualised as the ability of the state to benefit materially from the reform. Here I review two strands of literature that reflect this approach and concerns.

Governance without government: regulation

I will first draw on work from the field of political ecology and resource geography. This body of work shows that the ability to enforce collectively binding decisions about resource production must be understood in the context of wider state regulatory reforms that encourage a roll-back of government. Resource geography shows us that

the challenges that local governments face in relation to natural resource production have to do with their inability to control the activities of non-state private actors that have taken on the role of overseeing the production of natural resources since the waves of de-regulation in the 1980's (Bakker and Bridge 2008).

Resource geographers argue that decentralisation leads to the erosion of public oversight and state sovereignty over natural resource production. The work of David Harvey has been influential in arguing that decentralisation operates as a 'territorial fix' that aims to spatially and temporally enclose people and resources so that their relation can be fundamentally articulated around strategies of capital accumulation. Drawing on this work, resource geographers base their claims around the observation that democratic decentralisation and devolution reforms often go hand in hand with the corporatisation of natural resource production. They argue that democratic decentralisation is one among other regulatory 'devices', along with the privatisation of natural resources, fiscal and administrative cuts in public spending, and shifts in regulatory mechanisms away from governmental control, and towards voluntary, legally non-binding guidelines, that increase the oversight performed by corporate and civil society organisations rather than public administration (Harvey 2004, McCarthy and Prudham 2004, Jessop 2013, Castree 2008).

This literature shows that to understand the way public authority is exercised under decentralisation, we need to pay attention to the wider multi-scalar political economic context in which the reform is rolled out, and specifically to pay attention to regulatory changes that frame the conditions under which local governments are able to operate, and to the role of actors beyond the state, both in a scalar and institutional sense (Swyngedouw 2005). In this sense, the work of resource geographers has helped to re-conceptualise the central role of regulation. Specifically, some advocate for a re-conceptualisation of regulation as 'free from its traditional association with the formal rules and procedures administered by the state' (Bakker and Bridge 2008). This argument is based on the observation that the roll-back of government has given a role for non-state actors to regulate and therefore to exercise some authority over the production of natural resources. In the context of the present study these insights are useful in that they encourage that we pay attention to changes in the regulation of gold

and forest resources. Specifically, it invites an examination of the extent to which public authority over the production of woodfuel and gold resources is performed by public as well as private actors, and to the relation they entertain with local governments.

At the same time, resource geography continues to conceptualise regulation within public/private and state/market binaries, which prevents this work on regulation from contributing an understanding to state formation dynamics. The enduring commitment to analytical binaries has led to the argument that decentralisation is a form of re-regulation that represents an 'erosion of the state's legitimacy and scope for action [...] and the ceding by the state to the market of some of its authority and influence over the location, timing and rate of resource production' (Bakker and Bridge 2008, 229). For example Prudham (2007) shows through a case of water decentralisation that local governments are effectively (financially and technically) unable to carry out water service delivery themselves, they are forced to outsource water-testing to a private company that effectively acquires more control over both water service delivery and their quality. It is argued that decentralisation results in decreasing public oversight over natural resource production and to the institutionalisation of 'organised irresponsibility'. Democratic decentralisation in this case takes on the guise of a 'false promise' (Larner 2007). While offering to enhance the efficiency and equitability of water service delivery, downward devolution actually results in its degradation. It is argued that devolution effectively contributes to eroding public oversight and weakening the ability of the public to render those who produce resources accountable. The argument that is brought forth is that decentralisation is a half-hearted re-regulatory measure aiming to palliate the loss of central government control over natural resource production under de-regulation, which contributes to 'hollowing out' state to the benefit of private operators (Jessop 1994).

In addition to the dubious assumption of a zero sum game dynamics between state and markets, this approach does not help explain how decentralisation may contribute to the enduring persistence of the nation-state in the face of so-called de-regulation. As noted by Chalfin (2010, 3) an inferred conflation of decentralisation and re-regulation, or neoliberalisation, 'not only fails to capture the production of social and

political order, but do so by reproducing the paradigmatics of neoliberalism'. On the other hand, this interpretation of decentralisation as contributing to the 'hollowing out' of the state is not unanimous within the field of political ecology. Below I examine how the relation between decentralisation, authority and resources is conceptualised from the point of view of an alternative strand in political ecology, which argues that decentralisation does not extend 'the authority of the market' but that of central governments.

Re-centralisation: institutional competition

A second strand of political ecology work also looks at the exercise of public authority and the decentralisation of natural resources but has drawn the opposite conclusion from the approach reviewed above. Instead of arguing that decentralisation leads to the erosion of state power, it is suggested in this second political ecology strand that decentralisation actually represents a dynamics of the re-centralisation of state power. In order to draw conclusions about what this contradiction in the field of political ecology implies conceptually, I present some components of the political economic argument made in favour of re-centralisation.

This second strand of political ecology derives from work that has drawn on the Common Property scholarship as a background to formulate research questions, while leaving behind the neo-institutionalist underpinnings. More specifically, it has drawn on the insights generated by large-scale quantitative surveys on the success of institutional designs, as a basis for formulating more in-depth qualitative questions about the exercise of public authority. A summary of these quantitative insights features in the study by Andersson and Ostrom (2008). This study examines the incentives for local elected government leaders to invest in natural resource management. The survey shows that two factors are most influencing their decision to invest in natural resource management; firstly, the levels of fiscal transfers devolved to them in natural resource sectors, and secondly, the nature of their relations with local profit or non-profit making organisations operating in the domain of natural resource management. These insights have encouraged a number of political ecology scholars to seek an understanding of the operation of public authority as it is constrained by these factors.

Ribot (2009) for example gives an example of the way these factors play out in the ability of local elected leaders to exercise authority over charcoal production in Senegal. Drawing on an in-depth case study he shows that while local rural councils were devolved the right to approve or disapprove charcoal-making authorisation permits handed out to charcoal merchants, they were not able to enforce it in practice. Despite strong opposition to merchants by local woodcutters charcoal authorisations continues to be issued centrally by the Ministry of Environment in Senegal, and rural councils were obliged to sign authorisations because of pressure exerted on them by local forest civil servants, and by charcoal merchants. In this sense while rights have been devolved to local governments, they lack capacities of enforcement, which is retained by central administration that maintains, in a *de facto* manner, the corporate control of charcoal merchants over the benefits over forest resource production.

In this case, the exercise of public authority at the intersection of decentralisation and natural resource production is mediated by the ability of non-state actors to regulate the production of resources regardless of the rights and responsibilities devolved to local governments. This indicates that the emergence of authority over the production of resources is a result of competing claims of authority over resources that are not always strictly statutory. In this case both local governments and charcoal merchants are handed rights, the former *de jure* and the latter *de facto*, and authority over the production of charcoal emerges from the negotiation between these competing claims, in the everyday.

These conclusions contrast with resource geographers' claims in that while the economic interests of non-state actors are advanced, this comes also with an expansion of state power. This contradiction points to the fact that there is not a zero-sum game between state and market, but more interestingly, this latter strand of political ecology brings additional elements that complement a conceptualisation of regulation of the former. It shows that structural reforms, regardless of their neoliberal or otherwise underpinnings, have unintended structuring effects. While regulation may distribute certain rights over resources, including the right to non-state actors to regulate resources, the extent to which these actors are able to exercise authority over

these resources is less a product of statutory regulation *per se*, than the outcome of competing claims of authority that statutory resource regulation gives rise to.

What this indicates in the context of the relation between decentralisation, resources and authority is that we need to apprehend the regulation of gold and forest resources more critically. Firstly we need to pay attention to the fact that resource regulation gives rise to different and competing institutional formations and to the ways that their political economic interests align with one another.. Secondly, we need to examine the way that these alignments frame the room that local governments have to manoeuvre decisions about natural resource production.

At the same time the contrast pointed out above within the field of political ecology is significant. In the latter strand, it is argued that far from characterising an ‘erosion of state power’, decentralisation actually represents a recentralisation of resource control (Oyono 2004; Ribot et al. 2006). In the example raised here, this argument is supported by the fact that the political economic interest of central governments aligns with those of charcoal merchants rather than those of local woodcutters. So while local governments were handed a power of oversight, central administration continues to recognise the authority of merchants over that of local governments in the domain of charcoal production. In this work decentralisation is interpreted as a ‘repertoire of domination’ by the centre (Poteete and Ribot 2011).

The diverging interpretations of decentralisation as either the ‘erosion of state power’ or a ‘repertoire of domination’ also points to certain shortcomings of political economic approaches to resources and authority in the era of ‘governance without government’ (Raeymaekers, Menkhaus, and Vlassenroot 2008). The fact that it is not clear whose material interests are being advanced merits attention when we ask a wider question about state formation. On the one hand, this divergence may simply be explained by the very different contexts that characterise these respective studies – a market for land and other resources may exist in most full-blown capitalist economies, but the commodification of resources is very often only partially and porously captured by government regulation in most places in the rest of the world. On the other hand, the resonance across the cases suggests that a more fundamental

theoretical tension underlies this analytical divergence . Specifically, state formation cannot simply be measured through the contribution that a specific policy makes to the material basis of government (Robbins 2008, Bridge 2013). Rather, more fundamental questions must be asked about the kinds of social relations that make up contemporary state formation dynamics (Mitchell 1991). Below I elaborate on work that examines these relations empirically in anthropology and development studies, and I suggest to re-conceptualise the significance of regulation within the kinds of relations that contribute to the endurance and relevance of the *idea* of the state as an appropriate authority over resources in general, and under decentralisation in particular.

Decentralisation as a political formation: the recognition of claims

Anthropological approaches have shown that while the material basis of the state is important, state formation is also a symbolic process that is produced through relations rather than political economic configurations, or rather through the relational effects that these configurations have. In these approaches the question that is asked is how the idea of the state as an appropriate form of authority over resources endures through these relations. Conceptualised in this way, decentralisation contributes to state formation, not so much as a project of rule, that can advance either that of the market or that of central governments, but rather an arena that brings a variety of actors with diverging interests to relate with one another in a way that produces, reproduces and transforms the relevance of the state. Below I draw on this approach to shed light on the kinds of actors and relations we should pay attention to in the context of resource production and decentralisation.

Actors: twilight institutions

Like some of the literature reviewed above, anthropological approaches start with the observation that statutory regulation is only one of the ways in which natural resource regulation actually takes place; in the words of Lund (2008, 155) ‘laws, regulations and policies do not determine access and use of resources as such, but erect a structure of opportunities for the negotiation of these rights’. In addition they suggest

that the kinds of other repertoires of rule that resource producers mobilise to enforce collectively binding decisions about resource production matter. This does not mean that the law is not important. It simply means that to identify the actors who play a part in resource regulation we must look at practices at the interstice of form and norm.

In developing countries and in West Africa in particular, this postulate is substantiated by two prevalent states of affairs. Firstly, the rule of law is notoriously partial: there are many areas of national space and public life where the rule of law does not apply (Bryant, Paniagua, and Kizos 2011, Korf and Raeymaekers 2013). For example, even where government representatives are present on the ground, the rule of law is rarely applied to the letter (Blundo et al. 2006). In this sense regulation is better conceptualised as operating according to ‘practical norms’ rather than within private/public and legal/illegal binaries (Blundo et al. 2006). Secondly, government-sanctioned institutions, whether they are government bodies or institutions recognised by government such as private investors or property-right holders, are rarely the only ones making claims to resources and to govern resources. For example in Burkina and elsewhere in Africa traditional authorities, or more specifically certain members of specific lineages and families are also able to successfully lay claims over the way natural resources ought to be produced. The custom is therefore a normative register upon which claims of authority over resources are laid. These authorities may not be formally recognised but they do exert authority in practice. This is to say that practical norms are produced through a combination of normative registers such as the law and the custom.

The role of traditional authorities or so-called ‘customary’ or ‘neo-customary’ chiefs has been much discussed in resource governance, mostly in area and development studies, but the custom is not the only normative register that is significant alongside and/or in lieu of the law.¹³ Ethnographic work on the exercise of public authority for

¹³ In many countries ‘customary institutions’ are actually state-sanctioned institutions. In Ghana for example chiefs receive a salary. In Namibia ‘traditional courts’ are headed by traditional chiefs and their ruling is recognised by government. In Burkina traditional chiefs are not substantially, albeit legally, recognised by government, therefore I do not deal with the complexity of disentangling instances where ‘traditional leaders’ are and are not recognised by government because it is not relevant to the context of the study. It should be noted however that it is likely to become so in the

example has advanced the concept of ‘twilight’ as a way to qualify such institutional forms that sit at the intersection of different normative registers and that are neither strictly or both public and private (Lund 2008).

This work has drawn on the body of legal anthropological research that examines dilemmas of rule under conditions of institutional pluralism (von Benda-Beckmann, von Benda-Beckmann, and Wiber 2006). Legal anthropologists have shed light on dynamics of ‘forum shopping’ and ‘shopping forum’ whereby, in conditions of institutional pluralism, resource claimants may seek to assert their claims through a variety of normative registers (the law, the custom), but in turn, representatives from these normative registers may seek to assert their authority by attracting claimants (von Benda-Beckmann 1981). While anthropologists have mostly been concerned with elucidating generic rules that these dynamics play by, work in anthropology more widely has taken these insights to question the *forms* of institutional power that emerge from these dynamics, and how these play out in empirical contexts of state building dynamics (Lund and Boone 2013, Peluso and Lund 2011).

Qualifying these institutions with a ‘twilight’ character is particularly useful in this sense. The ‘twilight’ has this quality that it is both clear and obscure (Lund 2006). It is visible at one scale and invisible at another; twilight institutions for example might be less visible than customary authorities but play an equally significant role in resource regulation. These institutions of power may be invisible at first because they are neither the law nor the custom, and they may sometimes only involve one or a handful of individuals but the exercise of public authority cannot be understood without bringing them to light (Hagberg 2006). In other words these institutions are both and at once known and knowable, while being fragile, brittle, ephemeral and transient. These relational qualities shape the kind of relation that they entertain with government, and state formation emerges from that relation.

The concept of ‘twilight’ resembles other attempts to name hybrid institutions, such as ‘institutional bricolage’ (Cleaver 2001) or ‘informal institutions’ (Meagher 2007),

future. The new land law in Burkina grants significantly more power than the previous one to traditional chiefs (Jacob 2013). However right now this law remains nominal and is only at the stage of trials so I do not integrate this complexity here either.

but it differs from them in that it does not seek to single out the parts that make up the bricolage, but rather place an emphasis on relations, and particularly on the kinds of relations that these institutions entertain with governmental bodies. As such, drawing on the concept of 'twilight institutions' here does not suggest that we should reify this particular concept to qualify a 'third form of rule' that operates between form and norm, rather it is drawn upon here because it qualifies the kind of relation that these institutions entertain with government.

The fact that these institutions operate at the twilight is also significant in relation to the relevance of the state as an enduring idea. The fact that some institutions operate at the twilight means that they seek recognition from government bodies, and it is in that relation that the state finds relevance and is being built. In Burkina like elsewhere, the operation of state-sanctioned institutions only partially captures the way resources are regulated. In order to understand how the idea of the state is substantiated through the regulation of resources under conditions of decentralisation, we must therefore not only identify the other institutions that exercise public authority over the production of woodfuel and gold resources in the everyday and between form and norm but also qualify the *extent* to which they are able to exercise public authority over natural resource production for it shapes the relation they entertain with government institutions.

Relations: the politics of recognition

The body of work on twilight institutions is useful because it defines authority as a relational practice through acts of recognition, rather than as the product of a government imposing forms of regulation. The significance of recognition in dynamics of state formation is well articulated by Hagmann and Hoehne (2009, 44) who note that '[a]lthough modern states claim exclusive and universal sovereignty within their territory, bureaucratic, customary, religious and kinship institutions often coexist, each providing particular norms and procedures for managing public affairs and organising collectivities. As statutory law, customary law recognised by the state, and socially embedded rules *compete for institutionalisation*, there is a need to understand the dialectic relations between plural types of authority and law' (emphasis added). In this sense public authority is not the prerogative of state structures,

however ideas about the state come about through the ways in which those who exercise public authority recognize it.

Questions of recognition have of course not escaped the attention of scholars concerned with the political economy. While not speaking directly about relations of recognition, for example Scott (2009) argues that in agrarian societies, the limits of government are made up of peasants who refuse to recognise the state as they seek to resist or evade governmental rule. However the concept of twilight suggests that we need to turn this idea on its head based on the view that illegal or informal institutions of power, are not necessarily anti-government. On the contrary this body of work invites us to problematise dynamics of recognition empirically, and to ask what relation do these forms of institutions that escape full governmental oversight entertain with government. Specifically, the fact that these institutions operate at the twilight means that their authority is fragile, and while they operate at the margins of statutory frameworks, it might well be to their advantage to be recognised by them, as a way to enhance the reach and extent of their authority (Sikor and Lund 2009).

At the same time, a corollary to the ubiquitous and simultaneous normative and institutional pluralism is that some kind of politics is involved in dynamics of recognition. Decentralisation is a significant arena through which these dynamics of recognition take place. As noted in earlier parts of this Chapter, local governments are rarely devolved the necessary powers and resources to carry the mandate they have been assigned, or to carry out the actions that their constituents expect them to. In such cases where legal and material recognition is lacking, recognition operates through the relations between different state and non state-sanctioned institutions.

The decentralisation of fiscal powers to local governments has become one way through which citizens and state recognise one another (Roitman 2005). Since local governments were created they were transferred the right to levy taxes on resource production, but they are often wary to do so for fear of losing public support. In these contexts, local governments are often not the only ones raising revenue. For example, participatory development interventions have given rise to a multitude of other institutions of power, be they state-sanctioned or not, that also exert this

function (Juul 2006). The fact that these institutions of power are able to exert fiscal power without being afraid of losing votes means that they compete with local government over the exercise of public authority. In this thesis, particular attention is paid to taxation because it gives an indication of the way twilight institutions and local government recognise one another, and as such is an integral part of dynamics of recognition.

In this sense, while the law rarely goes as planned, the fact that the governmental repertoires, such as that of taxes, are mobilised has the effect of reinforcing the relevance of the state. By localising government, decentralisation opens up a variety of ways that governmental repertoires can be mobilised, recognised or ignored. Investigating the way these repertoires are mobilised by twilight institutions and local governments across the governance of gold and forest resources comparatively, illuminates the dynamics that underlie processes of state formation under decentralisation.

Theorising the resource-authority nexus: seeing like a local government

In this final section I draw on the insights brought on so far, to develop a conceptual framework that helps understand how public authority over the production of natural resources emerges, or what I refer to as the resource-authority nexus. In the review above I pointed out that an examination of this nexus in the context of decentralisation is particularly useful to address a certain theoretical tension in political economic approaches to dynamics of state formation. In the latter part of this Chapter I reviewed literature that suggests ways in which this tension might be resolved. Firstly, we need to examine decentralisation as a political formation, rather than a project of rule, and secondly, the way this political formation contributes to state formation is not merely in maintaining the material basis of government, but also in maintaining its symbolic basis as an idea. More specifically I argue that the symbolic basis of the state is maintained through relations of recognition that take place when twilight institutions are mobilised and engage in the field of decentralisation. Given these insights three core questions are advanced to understand

how the exercise of public authority over resources production contributes to state formation under conditions of decentralisation:

- 1) How does statutory resource regulation shape the form of institutional power that emerges over resources?
- 2) What relations of recognition between overlapping and competing institutions of power produce durable authority over the production of resources?
- 3) What ideas of the state are produced and shared as institutions of power compete or collaborate over authority?

These questions help shed light on the processes through which enduring forms of institutional power emerge and persist under conditions of so-called weak states. In this thesis I make the case that autonomy is an important idea, or register, which qualifies contemporary state-citizen relations in Burkina Faso and that is promoted through decentralisation. Drawing on the literature review above, and in view of these questions, I now present three concepts that have framed the research and that have helped develop this argument throughout this thesis.

Regulation

Regulation is central to the resource-authority nexus, particularly around the distribution of property rights. On the one hand resource regulation provides property rights that shape access to natural resources. On the other hand natural resources can also be accessed without property rights, and those who do and do not hold property rights are not able to exercise authority over the production of resources in the same way. This is true in the cases of gold and woodfuel resources in Burkina and elsewhere: in many places artisanal gold mining takes place illegally, miners operate without a permit. Woodfuel also is often collected and sold without government permits. Property rights is an empirical terrain upon which the relevance of the state plays out.

The partiality of statutory rule described earlier has encouraged some scholars to abandon the concept of property altogether, and to replace it with the notion of access. Ribot and Peluso (2003) argue that the concept of property is too narrow because it

only captures the range of resource users and producers who have property rights. They argue that the concept of access defined as the ability of resource users to benefit from resources rather than the property rights they have to these resources, better captures dynamics of partial statutory regulation. They relate the concept back to that of authority suggesting that we conceptualise the resource-authority nexus through the ‘bundles of power’ that relations of access give rise to.

However by abandoning property, we also lose sight of the state. The theory of access is useful in the same sense as that of ‘entitlements’ (Sen 1981, Leach, Mearns, and Scoones 1999), in that it provides a tool to map institutions pertaining resource benefits and market chain analyses that are closer to ‘reality’ than the concept of property rights would be. By abandoning property we lose focus on the relation between resource claimants and government, and therefore also of state formation. In this sense the conceptual advantage of property here is not so much that it captures ‘reality’ but that it is a refraction of governmental ‘vision’, a normative framework through which governmental bodies communicate what reality ought to look like, and thereby also a clue for us to understand the relation they entertain with resource claimants.

At the same time a focus on regulation does not mean that we discard instances when state-sanctioned regulatory frameworks are absent from the resource-authority nexus. On the contrary these instances are central to this nexus as lawlessness fundamentally defines the relevance of law. Therefore regulation is conceptualised here as claims of authority over the production of resources, where property rights are only one of the many other ways to make such claims. The examples of gold and woodfuel resources in Burkina illuminate the ways in which the rights of small-scale resource producers are recognised or not by government shape their relation back to government in local arenas in Séguénéga. In the case of small-scale mining for example, the fact that gold diggers do not have formal rights to producing gold leads local governments to discard them as legitimate citizens. In this sense it is important to establish the process through which they come *not* to have rights.

Conceptualising regulation as such within the resource-authority nexus also requires that we turn the concept of governmentality on its head: state-sanctioned regulation mediates the resource-authority nexus not so much for the way resource use is made legible, but also and importantly for the ways that it is not. Regulation is not used to illuminate how projects of rule are imposed and internalised, but rather to shed light on the limits of these projects of rule. Instead of seeing laws and regulations as the production of a normalised and standardising political order, laws and regulations are seen to produce a messy order of formal and informal, legal and illegal, set of activities. Through regulation, producers become categorised, but what is relevant here is not to highlight what these categories are (e.g. formal/informal, legal/illegal) nor where they emerge (e.g. they might be categorised as ‘formal’ and ‘legal’ in places where resources are more or less valuable to central government) but to qualify the kind of relation that resource claimants and governmental bodies entertain with one another as a result of that categorisation (Boone 2009). Analytically therefore what is at stake here is to critically examine state-sanctioned regulation and identify the institutional vacuums, the forms of institutional power that emerge from these vacuums and the relation these entertain with government.

In this thesis I show that this relation has a lot to do with autonomy: on the one hand, statutory frameworks distinguish local governments as a historically singular form of local administration in the fact that they must become financially autonomous from the centre (Chapter Four), and on the other hand, the partial reach of resource regulation distinguishes resource producers in the degree of autonomy vis-à-vis government over the organisation of resource production (Chapter Five). When these two dimensions of autonomy meet, they produce a particular kind of struggle between resource producers and local government over their respective claims for greater autonomy, which are expressed in the arena of decentralisation and increases the relevance of the state in resource governance.

Recognition

As shown in the latter part of this review of literature, recognition is central to the resource-authority nexus firstly because legal provisions framing resource property are partial and rights to access resources are negotiated in the everyday, and secondly

because the way these negotiations take place shape the authority that institutions of power may exercise over resource production but also beyond this domain. What is at stake conceptually is to narrow down the kinds of relations of recognition that shape the resource-authority nexus under decentralisation.

The literature on the politics of recognition is vast (Nyamnjoh and Englund 2004, Fraser 2000, Taylor et al. 1994, Ribot 2010), and I will confine my conceptualisation to two relations of recognition that are comparatively relevant under a context of decentralisation in the production of gold and forest resources. The first relates to vertical relations of recognition that allow ‘twilight institutions’ to acquire and maintain authority over the production of resources vis-à-vis overlapping state-sanctioned institutions (recognition from above) and vis-à-vis resource producers (from below). The second kind is horizontal and refers to the kind of relation that twilight institutions entertain with the local government vis-à-vis natural resources: given that the imperative of autonomy for local government can be enhanced by taxing resource production, and given the degree of autonomy that resource producers enjoy, horizontal relations of recognition illuminate how the claims of authority of local governments relate to those of twilight institutions over the production of natural resources.

Ideas of vertical and horizontal configurations of recognition have also been proposed by Lund and Hahonou (2014, 15) whereby ‘vertical recognition refers to the reciprocal recognition between those who claim rights and those who claim institutional power; it is a contractual relation. Horizontal recognition comprises two aspects: firstly the relations between various institutions of power, including their cooperation or competition vis a vis their respective jurisdictional competence, and secondly the relations between various actors requiring similar rights’ (my translation). This conceptualisation informs, but also differs conceptually from the one presented here. The conceptualisation offered by Lund and Hahonou seeks to advance an understanding of the relation between property and citizenship, while my work attempts to qualify the nature of the contract that ties states and citizens through the co-production of resources and authority under decentralisation.

Firstly we need to examine relations of recognition that shape the emergence and endurance of twilight institutions. Given the ubiquitous normative pluralism that prevails in developing societies, where the rule of law is weak and where a multitude of both official and non-official institutions populate regulatory vacuums, I conceptualise the co-production of resources and authority as a result of claims of authority over resources, and more specifically of the recognition of these claims. The concept of regulation elaborated above suggests that statutory frameworks shape the ability to make claims over resources but only partially, and vertical relations of recognition illuminate the dynamics through which these claims are made and maintained over time in practice and within the interstices of state-sanctioned resource regulation.

There are various directions that these relations of recognition take: from below, by resource producers; from above, by various governmental and non-governmental actors, and from across, by institutions of power that compete for the exercise of public authority, as may be the case between twilight institutions and municipal ones. Vertical recognition is clearly important in the production of public authority in both the cases of gold and woodfuel production. In Séguénéga small-scale gold digging takes place in the absence of statutory regulation, but it does not mean that gold production is unregulated, nor does it mean that government-sanctioned institutions of power are absent on the ground altogether. Indeed the ability of those who regulate production to make claims over resource production rests on both ground-level government institutions of power to turn attention away from these practices, and on the other, on the extent to which gold diggers acknowledge the authority of those who regulate production. Similarly in the case of woodfuel, the parastatal government agency supposed to exercise authority over woodfuel production typically lacks the capacities to enforce that authority. In this case, other individuals step in to regulate production. The ability for these individuals to maintain these claims relies on the relation they entertain with the parastatal government agency (from above) and with resource producers (from below).

Secondly we need to pay attention to horizontal relations of recognition between twilight institutions and government. Work that examines the impacts of community-

based natural resource management carried out in the name of decentralisation is useful in this regard. It shows that interventions often devolve powers, resources and institutional authority to non-democratic local institutions (e.g. either local civil society institutions or customary institutions like traditional chiefs), rather than local elected decentralised institutions. It is argued that the material and symbolic recognition of non-elected local institutions in environment and development interventions carried out in the name of decentralisation exacerbate local institutional competition and short-circuits the accountability potential of democratic institutional mechanisms (Chhatre 2007, Ribot 2010).

The present study takes some distance vis a vis the structuralist underpinnings of this work, particularly towards the assumption that top-down recognition, such as sufficient resource and power transfers, of locally elected institutions does bring about local relations of accountability between elected leaders and citizens. On the other hand this work is useful in that it raises the significance of horizontal relations of recognition within the resource-authority nexus. This work has shown that a particular kind of politics emerges when local governments are neglected from above, either by central governments, or by donors who prefer to carry development projects through civil society or customary institutions. This literature points to the need to examine what this politics may be about and how it mediates dynamics through which enduring forms of institutional power emerge and persist under conditions of weak government. The insights generated through this literature are very relevant to the case of woodfuel production presented in this study where donors play a role in mediating the relation between twilight institutions and local governments. In the case of gold mining, horizontal recognition is also characterised by the respective relations of local governments and twilight institutions vis a vis taxation. A second aspect of recognition therefore pertains to the relation that twilight institutions and local government entertain with each other, specifically the question is whether twilight institutions and local governments cooperate or compete with one another.

Together these two dimensions of recognition (tackled in Chapter Six and Seven) illuminate the ways in which enduring forms of institutional power emerge and are maintained over time under conditions where government presence is poor. The focus

on relations of recognition involving local government within this resource-authority nexus also brings to light the ways in which decentralisation contributes to state formation in this context.

Political field

In order to understand the significance of decentralisation for state formation the last missing piece to conceptualising the resource-authority nexus is to qualify the kind of politics that emerges out of these relations of recognition. As pointed out in the literature review above, decentralisation is not a ‘thing’ that is imposed from above, but a field of relations. Having narrowed down in the above section the range of relations of recognition that produce durable authority under conditions of weak government and overlapping institutions of power, a question that comes to mind now is recognition of/for what? Qualifying the politics that takes place through relations of recognition us grasp the way the relevance of the state is (re)defined under decentralisation.

A significant body of work has shown that decentralisation reforms have, without intending it, resulted in a return of customary authorities in the management of local affairs (Bayart, Geschiere, and Nyamnjoh 2001, Geschiere 2011, Pottier 2005, Buur and Kyied 2007). This body of work emphasises the ways in which decentralisation reforms has created a ‘bureaucratic vacuum’ and revived neo-customary territorial and identity-based factionalism. The ‘return to the custom’ that takes place under decentralisation demonstrates that the kind of politics that takes place under decentralisation articulates around competing claims over belonging. For example the kind of bureaucratic vacuum (of power and resource transfers) that frames decentralisation reforms have encouraged local elected governments to seek support with traditional authorities. As traditional authorities often compete over jurisdictional boundaries for example they encourage local elected governments to take sides, thus redefining configurations of social and political exclusion along ethnic or other identity-based lines (Le Meur 2012, Lentz 2013).¹⁴ While this literature informs this

¹⁴ This body of work makes a distinction between etic and emic conceptualisations of citizenship whereby the former considers that citizenship is the sole prerogative of government, while the latter considers that political rights are articulated through registers and norms that have evolved with and outwith formal institutions (see also Jacob 2009).

study, it should not be assumed that the politics of belonging necessarily results from the politics of recognition that takes place under decentralisation. Rather ‘the custom’ can be considered as one among other registers, or fields, through which claims of political representation are articulated (electoral politics being another one). Here therefore I do not consider the substantial ways in which political representation is transformed under decentralisation (i.e. citizenship), but rather the changing formal (as in ‘form’) character of political representation under conditions of decentralisation.

The question that preoccupies this study is not to discover how decentralisation redefines citizenship rights via either electoral politics or the politics of belonging, but rather to find out what is specific about decentralisation that redefines the relevance of the state. In this sense what is analysed is not so much the ways and extent to which political rights are shaped through decentralisation, but to qualify the political field that characterises democratic decentralisation.

I draw on the work of Bourdieu (1981) on the ‘political field’ to arrive at the qualification of this formal character. Bourdieu defines society as being made up of a combination of distinct and overlapping fields (economic, political, religious). What characterises a field fundamentally is the common ground upon which actors, positioned hierarchically within society, struggle over their respective interests. The distinction between belonging and autonomy resembles the one Bourdieu makes between ‘*jeu*’ (the game) and ‘*enjeu*’ (the stakes). While the politics of belonging sheds light on what is at stake (citizenship), here I am rather concerned with the changing nature of the game. In this sense I am not concerned with the registers that are invoked to make certain claims prevail, but rather the common ground on which actors involved in the politics of recognition meet. The question is not to determine who wins or who loses from the deployment of decentralisation, but rather to find out what brings twilight institutions and local government together in the field of decentralisation despite their different hierarchical positions in society. The analysis of the politics of recognition as a field brings to light autonomy as common register upon which these institutions relate under decentralisation (Chapter Seven). In turn

the identification of this common ground sheds light on the enduring relevance of the state under decentralisation.

Conclusion

In this Chapter I have reviewed a number of different approaches to understanding how public authority over natural resource production emerges under decentralisation, and what that teaches us about state formation dynamics. Such a review of decentralisation is important because it lends insight into dynamics of state formation. I started with a governmentality critique of neo-institutional approaches to natural resource governance and decentralisation. I showed that the concept of governmentality better accounts for the way diverging resource claims are reconciled and made governable. In this approach decentralisation is conceptualised as a technology of rule through which resource users become subjectified to the rationality of government, and public authority comes from this process of subjectification. At the same time these approaches also show that those intent on ‘subjectifying’ resource users may have conflicting rationalities (like the fact that donors encourage fiscal decentralisation, while governments resist it). The question that this brings up is whose project of rule is advanced through decentralisation.

The second part of this review confronts two diverging political economic approaches that respectively tackle this question in the field of political ecology. The two approaches are concerned with illuminating the configurations of political and economic power that emerge through decentralisation as it is imposed as a ‘technology of rule’. Together these approaches converge over two insights about the way public authority comes about under decentralisation: firstly, they point out we must pay attention to changes in resource regulation, and specifically the retreat of government from resource regulation, because this has given rise to a range of non-state actors that are able to lay and assert claims of authority over resource production that compete with that of the state. Secondly, these approaches show that claims of authority are never settled facts, and we must therefore examine how these claims compete with those of government, and how they are negotiated under conditions of decentralisation. Together these insights suggest that to understand the way public

authority comes about under decentralisation, we must posit authority as an empirical question and examine its emergence in the everyday. We must first pay attention to the different kinds of institutions of power over gold and woodfuel producers that regulation gives rise to, the claims they are able to make and enforce over resource production, and the way these claims are validated or undermined under conditions of decentralisation.

A review of these two different approaches also allows to make a wider theoretical point about dynamics of state formation. While the processes illuminated by these two political economic approaches resonate one another, they also draw different conclusions as to how decentralisation contributes to state formation: on the one hand decentralisation is presented as a process of ‘state erosion’ and on the other it is interpreted as a process of re-centralisation and a ‘repertoire of domination’. Instead of trying to argue for one over the other, it is my contention here that this divergence reflects a theoretical tension within political economic approaches to state formation. Specifically the question that we need to ask is not whether decentralisation reinforces or undermines the material basis of government, but rather how decentralisation promotes and sustains the idea that the state is an appropriate form of authority over resource production.

The third part of the literature review examines insights from anthropological research that help us grasp both the symbolic and material dimensions of state formation. Two relevant insights are brought into view through this work: first, twilight institutions are advanced as a useful concept to probe the social contours of public authority without assuming that state institutions have a monopoly over resource regulation. Second the concept suggests that the significance of decentralisation for state formation does not lay so much on the way the reform is imposed, but how it is appropriated, through relations of recognition in the everyday.

The last part of this literature review brings together the insights presented above around three core research questions that frame this study and develops a framework that helps conceptualise the resource-authority nexus comparatively. Firstly, regulation helps capture the structural conditions under which twilight institutions

come about, second recognition sheds light on the way they are maintained under conditions of decentralisation and last, the notion of field sheds light on the way decentralisation contributes to the endurance of the state as an appropriate ideational entity within the resource-authority nexus. Below I explain how these three concepts were operationalized to understand how decentralisation contributes to state formation in Séguénéga.

Chapter 3. Seeing public authority in Séguénéga

In this Chapter, I explain how the research was undertaken, from a methodological point of view, and I present analytical limitations. The relevance of Burkina as a typical case of a ‘weak’ state, and one where dynamics of decentralisation are sufficiently advanced to be able to observe its effects on dynamics of state formation was outlined in Chapter One. I also emphasised the relevance of gold and woodfuel as lenses to examine the exercise of authority over these resources, which informs about the way decentralisation contributes to state formation: on the one hand, Burkina Faso can be qualified as an ‘extraverted’ state (Bayart 1989), which is being built from the outside by the mining and development industries that do not always play in favour of the material interests of its constituency, namely small-scale miners and woodfuel producers. At the same time, Burkina Faso can be characterised as a semi-authoritarian state that has kept a tight grip over the production of gold and forest resources and has devolved little powers and resources for local governments to be able to manage these sectors (Hilgers 2010), but this has not prevented popular mobilisation around the reform. This curious state of affairs forms the backdrop of the puzzle that preoccupies this study. The linkages between decentralisation and resource production are a way to illuminate the processes through which enduring forms of institutional power emerge and persist under conditions of weak states.

Specifically, the conceptual framework presented in Chapter Two directs our attention to three specific phenomena that need to be analysed to understand how the intersection of resource production and decentralisation contributes to state formation. Firstly we must investigate the institutional effects that emerge from statutory resource regulation; second, we must examine the way overlapping institutions of power relate in the everyday in relation to resource production. Thirdly, we must analyse how the relations that play out in the field decentralisation reproduce the idea of the state as separate from society and an appropriate authority over the production of resources.

In order to operationalize this conceptual framework, a case study approach was chosen because it allows the enquiry to be situated in a specific place to be able to observe relations of recognition, and for sufficient time to be able to grasp to a

satisfactory extent the meaning and relevance of these interactions (Burawoy 1998). Qualitative methods including qualitative interviews, participant observation and the analysis of written sources documents, were used in order to gain access to overlapping institutions of power over the production of gold and woodfuel resources, and to the ways in which they relate to one another in the field of decentralisation. Before turning to method, I explain the research approach in context. Indeed the set up of the case study is crucial: situating the study in Séguénéga allowed me to observe particular relations of authority rather than others, which then prompted a particular analytical strategy. In the following discussion I explain which particular relations I was able to observe in Séguénéga and the approach undertaken to operationalize the framework described above.

An embedded case study: design, scope and scale

The literature review and conceptual framework elaborated in Chapter Two guided the research methodology and analysis. The analytical framework constructed around regulation, recognition and political field form the basis of an enquiry that emphasises the global and globalising character of decentralised state restructuring, while at the same time requires an observation of the way relations of authority play out in very localised contexts and in the everyday. In other words the framework allows for an analysis of the resource-authority nexus beyond place and beyond particular resources., The main methodological challenge was therefore precisely to find place and resources that would best allow operationalizing the framework. Seguenega, gold and woodfuel were to a certain extent found serendipitously, but operationalizing the framework took careful reflexive methodological engineering.

In Chapter One I laid out the empirical significance of the commune of Séguénéga to study the emergence and persistence of institutional power under weak states. In order to study competing claims to resources and claims to govern resources, it was useful to situate the study in two particular places – tracing back the threads of resource claims is easier when one is dealing with a single ore pit and knick of the woods. In order to examine the exercise of authority over gold and forest resources therefore an embedded case study design was adopted.

In the commune of Séguénéga, Bakou and Sima are both appropriate vantage points to examine the exercise of public authority over gold and woodfuel resources respectively. Because these resources are produced in these respective places, but also because the interests of small-scale producers, international actors, central and local governments intersect in these places.

Having chosen to focus on the cases of Bakou and Sima, one imperative was to get a better understanding to the way people made a living in these villages, how these differed between and within these villages. I examined the importance of woodfuel and gold resources in the household economy in each village. In order to understand intra-village differences I focused on two households in each village; one that was particularly wealthy and engaged in the production of these resources, and another one that was less so. Between July and August 2011 I conducted oral histories with members of these households and their involvement with the production of these resources (Table 1 below indicates the ways in which this fit within the time spent in the field). Landholding and oral histories in Bakou and Sima generated important insights into production and authority over these resources within these villages, but also between these villages and municipal authorities.

What does embeddedness bring?

It would have been possible to study the linkages between decentralisation and state formation by focusing on either gold or woodfuel. Theoretically, the value of embedded case-studies over ‘holistic’ ones is to be able to observe finer grain interactions within a particular case and phenomenon (Travers 2001). In this sense, the advantage of the embedded case study design is also to investigate the finer grain insights within embedded units of analysis, here gold and forest resources, and their significance for the phenomenon of decentralisation as a process of state formation.

Much of the literature reviewed in the previous Chapter has resulted from case studies that enquire processes of decentralisation from one single resource. However, in these studies, it is not always clear whether the processes observed are better generalised in relation to the process of decentralisation as a singular aspect of state formation, or in

relation to the regulatory or metabolic significance of particular resources (Bakker and Bridge 2008). In this sense, the embedded approach taken here helps to sharpen the focus on decentralisation.

It is important to make a note of the perceived relation between comparative and embedded case study research in the research design and analysis (Yin 2003). On the one hand, this research does not seek to compare the exercise of public authority over gold and woodfuel resources is not sought, but rather patterns are highlighted through the operationalisation of the analytical constructs employed. On the other hand, the analysis of this resonance is what led to see the significance of autonomy as a particular kind of politics through which decentralisation processes contribute to state formation in Burkina. In this sense, comparison is used to reach a higher level of abstraction rather than ‘generalisability’ of results, and the embedded design makes this approach possible.

The embedded design also presents a set of methodological challenges with regards to abstraction: The metabolisms of gold and forest resources are different, so are the political history of their regulation, and the sets of actors that lay claims and exercise authority over them. The issue of data collection is tackled below, but before turning to this issue, it is important to mention that the cases of Bakou and Sima were only contained to the extent that they constituted useful *starting points* to ask questions about the various institutions of power and the way they relate in the making of public authority under conditions of decentralisation. In this sense, focusing the enquiry on Bakou and Sima does not mean that the enquiry was limited to these places, but *seen from* the villages of Bakou and Sima. First hand observation of the way gold and woodfuel was being produced in Bakou and Sima provided a baseline for a number of questions that were then taken to national and international decision-makers in each sector. This remark brings up the question of scale, and what approach to take in order to illuminate the exercise of public authority over these resources when actors across scales are involved. Below I explain the approach taken to make linkages between these resources and decentralisation.

Following the policy

Choosing to examine the emergence and persistence of institutional power from one single commune responds to the commitment to the analysis of the exercise of public authority in the everyday, but the investigation was ‘multi-sited’ (Marcus 1995). This means that while the analytical point of departure is Séguénéga, and more precisely Bakou and Sima, the exercise of public authority over gold and woodfuel resources is connected to processes that operate in different places and within different scales. These include national level regulation over these resources, and the authority claims by international actors outside national frameworks. By including these different actors within the enquiry, the study avoids the ‘localist trap’ of case study research, especially when examining decentralisation (Purcell and Brown 2005).

One of the main methodological approaches to the field has been to follow the policy. There is often a disarticulation between the way statutory policies are thought out and what happens on the ground when these policies are rolled out in practice. The fact that regulation as it is inscribed in policies and laws never quite match what goes on in practice does not mean that they should be disregarded altogether. On the contrary, as has been observed by scholars before (Lund 2010, Lewis and Mosse 2006), an observation of this disarticulation sheds important insights into the emergence of forms of institutional power that make up dynamics of state formation (Ferguson and Gupta 2002).

The study focused on identifying these gaps in the mining and forestry sectors, and in relation to decentralisation policies, and on analysing the kinds of social relations and political configurations that fill and explain these gaps. In this sense, following the policy and specifically looking for the gap between advocacy and practice does not aim to assess the effectiveness of laws, but to identify critical moments, locations and relations of the exercise of public authority *given* the mismatch between regulation in laws and practice.

It should be noted here that there are two possible points of entry to ‘following the policy’. One can either pursue this approach from below or from above. The former point of entry was chosen. As pointed out by Goffman (1989, 130) ‘you can more

easily move up a social system, than down'. Indeed, research that starts the examination of a phenomenon (e.g. land conflicts, forest management, etc) from the point of view of formal regulation is already skewed by 'governmental rationality'. However 'following the policy from below' does not aim to get at some sort of 'authenticity', but simply to emphasise that a rigorous commitment to uncovering multiple meanings is essential to understanding the exercise of public authority, as if no one from the outside was looking (Ribot and Larson 2004).

At the same time, regulation is conceptualised as a 'structure of opportunity' that frames relations of authority over resources, and it is important to understand both the structures and the opportunities they provide. In order to examine and understand the meaning of relations of recognition in Séguénéga, it was important to understand these 'structures'. The gap between policy and practice is not one that is systematically mirrored through national level and local level phenomena however. Indeed discrepancies between law and practice are also reflected in the discrepancies among decision-makers' rationalities at the national level. It is within these discrepancies that the emergence and persistence of institutional power is analysed.

In order to see institutional power, I examined not only state-sanctioned institutions under laws, codes and regulations, but also those emerging from the shortcomings these laws as they take on the task of addressing these shortcomings in the everyday. Statutory regulation is an expression of state rationality and state power and their shortcoming gives an indication of the reach of government institutional power. At the same time, their shortcoming does not necessarily mean an absence of government. Rather institutions of power emerging from gaps or impracticalities in the regulation also interact with government-sanctioned institutions, and this is why the study is framed as the relations of recognition between them and within regulatory gaps.

Approaching the exercise of public authority from these 'gaps', and starting from below, helps shed light on the processes that build the state as an ideational effect, rather than a mere structuring force;; it helps to capture its contradictory nature as both 'sovereign and immanent', as both 'a product and driver of territorialisation'

(Bridge 2013). Before tackling the techniques employed to systematically shed light on these moments and relations, below I make a note on the empirical context in which these techniques were employed for each ‘embedded unit’.

Mapping institutional power over gold resources from the village of Bakou

Following the policy from below in the case of gold production was effectuated from the village of Bakou where most gold digging takes place in Séguénéga. This included formal and informal interviews with gold diggers about the organisation of gold digging work, which shed light on the forms of institutional power over gold resources in Bakou. This was triangulated with less in-depth study in other surrounding villages as a way to establish the extent to which what was typical and odd about these practices. As a way to scale up the enquiry, the relation between diggers and municipal authorities was studied in detail in Bakou, focusing on the moments and the ways they interacted. The enquiry greatly benefitted from the fact that good rapport had been established with residents in Bakou, especially with one CVD representative/gold digger who later became an important field assistant and ‘gatekeeper’ – an issue I return to later on.

The enquiry was further scaled up a notch through the study of relations between gold diggers, municipal authorities and representatives from a transnational mining company that had held a mining exploration license over the area in Bakou where diggers work. I cast these relations against the ‘vision’ laid out by staff at the Ministry of Mines and in legislation framing the way these actors ‘ought to’ relate. This approach helped me see the relations of recognition between these various institutions of power exercising (partial) collectively binding decisions over the production of gold within the field of decentralisation.

Mapping institutional power over woodfuel from the village of Sima

Examining the resource-authority over the production of woodfuel resources were most closely studied in Sima, a village located 5km north of Séguénéga. This was mostly motivated by the fact that Sima was one of the villages that had been chosen to implement a donor-funded project aiming to create ‘municipal forests’. The project

was a useful platform in the sense that it provided an opportunity for extending the study beyond Sima to villages that also benefited from the project. Group interviews were carried out with forest management committees that had been created for the project and they focused on identifying the individuals exercising authority over the production of woodfuel beyond Sima, and the basis on which they could lay such claims. These were cast against, or rather situated within, the wider policy framework for woodfuel regulation and forest decentralisation in Burkina, and the institutions of power that emerged within the discrepancies between statutory regulation and the regulation of woodfuel production on the ground helped identify the relevant relations of recognition in the everyday. The project was also useful to make connections with municipal authorities and across scales. As such, municipal authorities, donors and national and local level government institutions of power were interviewed about changes in the exercise of public authority over the production of woodfuel induced by the project. These insights were complemented by first-hand observation in the everyday in the field of decentralisation.

Data collection

Three sources of data were mostly used here: interviews, fieldnotes from participant observation and written sources. These techniques allowed me to build a rich dataset on the gap between policy and practice and the relations of recognition that populate this gap and intersect with the field of decentralisation. In addition to these techniques, the time spent in the field allowed me to see these relations, not necessarily where I imagined I would find them from the scholarship I had read. Below I explain that these differences came out of a strong research design grounded in the qualitative research techniques cited above as well as the ways in which time in the field was spent before these techniques were employed.

Time in the field

The time spent in the field was very valuable in two methodological senses that account for the robustness of this case study. Firstly, given my ethnographic approach, this time spent in the field allowed me to acclimatise, become reasonably

proficient in Mooré and find my place as a researcher in Séguénéga which is crucial in ethnographic research (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007 [1983]). Secondly, the time spent in the field provided crucial contextual insights on the kinds of resources produced in the area.

When?	Where?	What?
October – December 2010	Ouagadougou	Mooré training with the catholic missionaries
January – February 2011	Séguénéga (Sima and Rallé)	34 semi structured interviews with customary chiefs, all lineage heads and some household heads on changes in livelihoods and authority over land and natural resources.
March – June 2011	Séguénéga (32 villages within the commune of Séguénéga)	Large-n survey (402 respondents) Livelihoods, individualisation of farming and changing authority within the household
July - August 2011	Séguénéga (Sima and Bakou)	In-depth study of farming decisions at the household level and small-scale mining. These were investigated in four households (two in Sima and two in Bakou including one more and one less wealthy household in each village).
October 2011 – June 2012	Séguénéga and Ouagadougou	Embedded case study of authority over gold and forest from the cases of Bakou and Sima.
December 2012	Séguénéga and Ouagadougou	Observing municipal elections and further interviews at national level.

Table 1. Time spent in the field

The six fieldtrips summarised above were crucial in an ethnographic sense in that staying for extended periods, leaving and coming back significantly shaped the quality of my understanding of meaning nuances. This thesis benefitted from generous support that allowed fieldwork to take place over multiple and extensive periods of time without which this work could have not come together. The data that is analysed in this thesis is mostly drawn from fieldwork conducted between September 2011 and June 2012, with an additional visit during the municipal elections in December 2012.

I spent almost a year between October 2010 to June 2011 in Burkina and in Séguénéga before starting the fieldwork that generated most of the data analysed here. A turning point came at that time, which was crucial methodologically. Up until then, I had been mostly paying attention to relations of authority and contentious resource politics at the farm level, in relation to farmland. This was informed by political ecology and anthropological work on the politics of agrarian change in the Sahel (Bassett and Crummey 1993, Chauveau et al. 2006). During the initial time spent in the field, and through the interviews conducted (see Table 1), I became aware that contested politics could mostly be found at the municipal level rather than the farm level, which required that I shift the gaze up, from farm to municipality. I realised that I was repeatedly told that the '*waaf*o' does not have unanimous support in the commune of Séguénéga'. '*Waaf*o' means 'snake' in mooré, and the snake is the totem animal of the lineage of the customary chief of Séguénéga. Since the first municipal elections in 2006 in Séguénéga, symbols the *waaf*o started to appear increasingly often as a way to represent the municipality of Séguénéga. I was told that the non-unanimity of the '*waaf*o' came from the unease felt by certain parts of the population about the symbolic association between this particular family and the municipality, as if the latter belonged to the former. This indicated to me that politics was observable in Séguénéga, but I had to shift my gaze a scale up, from the farm to the municipality.

The fact that contentious politics was observable at the municipal rather than the farm level encouraged me to make some theoretical and scalar adjustment, and study relations of authority over resources at the municipal level, where they were observable. I also learned that forest and gold resources were both resources that intersected with municipal politics and competing claims of access, and that these were therefore appropriate empirical sites to study the exercise of authority under conditions of decentralisation.¹⁵

¹⁵ A third case had initially been considered. It pertained the construction of a water dam in the commune of Séguénéga. This case was considered because it was situated within the municipality and because it brought together off-season vegetable gardeners around the water area where the dam was being built. The case would have brought together the interests of governmental actors in charge of building the dam, external donors who funded the project, and off-season vegetable producers over the governance of water. However this case was quickly abandoned because municipal authorities were poorly involved and therefore it was not sufficiently conducive to observing their involvement in water management issues. In addition, three cases would have imposed time limitations on the other two cases that had been identified.

Livelihoods survey

A livelihood survey was initially conducted to shed light on contentious resource politics, livelihood and authority changes at the farm level, but also to give a panoramic view of the resources used by people to make a living and transformations in authority over these resources at the municipal level. It was conducted between March and May 2011, included 32 villages (out of 66 villages in the commune of Séguénéga) and 402 respondents of equally represented genders. Issues of statistical representativeness are not discussed here because the survey was found to lack certain reliability, and the statistical tests were not run. As I accompanied enumerators on the ground, I could observe the attitudes of respondents, and these suggested to me that the data would typically be difficult to use. For example poor respondents were eager to 'find' or 'invent' assets, while relatively well-off dwellers tended to not report some of them and had to be 'teased' by the enumerators to open up. Secondly a number of important questions had to be dropped for ethical reasons: the fact that the enumerators were from the area compromised the anonymity of respondents and the ethical integrity of the research. Some questions about livelihood strategies and wealth had to be abandoned. Another set of questions about authority at the household and farm levels was compromised as I realised towards the end of the survey that I had not been precise enough for them to be translated properly.

These mishaps are quite typical of the challenges of conducting questionnaire surveys on issues of poverty and in poor context (Hagberg 2001b, Desai and Potter 2008), and while I had read and used the insights generated by the literature on these topics, I did not feel confident about the reliability of the data and decided not to use them. In addition conducting this survey brought me closer to realise the contextual and mobile nature of livelihoods such that in places where people are constantly moving in and out of households, data gathered at any one moment in time can be easily 'distorting' (Breusers 2001), and for these reasons the statistical tests were not run.¹⁶

However the survey was undertaken for another important methodological reason. It was useful in acquiring a wider view on issues of resource production and changes in

¹⁶ At the same time, some interesting insights emerged from this work and I intend to run the analysis in further work and try to work around statistical issues. This also intends to do justice to the time and hospitality that research informants invested in it.

authority over resources in the commune of Séguénéga. It informed me about the ways that people made a living, but also about dynamics of resource distribution and resource use in the commune of Séguénéga. It gave me access to observations about the intersections of decentralisation within the resource authority-nexus. Specifically, over the course of the survey I learned that the North of the municipality is well-endowed with forest resources, but inhabitants of that area had little opportunities to diversify livelihoods. In that area however, I learnt that a British NGO was implementing a project aiming to ‘secure local access to forest resources’ by creating two municipal forests, which was transforming the way public authority was being enforced over forest resources, woodfuel being the most valuable one of them. In the South-West of the municipality forest resources are scarcer, but a number of villages have been engaging with small-scale mining for the last 25 years. I also learnt that since the early 2000s, a transnational mining company conducted exploration work in the area and applied for an exploitation permit to start building an open-pit mine in the area, the development of which, the municipality ought to facilitate.

The survey was also a crucial way to acquire ‘fieldworker skills’: I needed to improve my language skills, to learn the social and cultural conventions of behaviour and conversation, to increase my confidence as the only foreigner within a 50km radius and my legitimacy as a researcher. The survey was administered by three enumerators, whom I accompanied in the field alternatively over a period of three months, and it provided a systematic tool for acquiring these skills.

As such, the survey was internal to the research design. By locating the research in this way, I was able to see the significance of gold and woodfuel production for livelihoods, but also to see that these intersected with the exercise of authority at different scales, by other than local institutions of power, and in ways that would take me to ask questions about state-building. These dynamics were investigated in greater detail through a variety of other techniques.

Interviews

Interviews were used widely for data collection: semi-structured individual and group interviews were mostly used at different empirical ‘moments’ of the research. This is

to say that different types of interview were chosen in relation to specific data collection requirements and contextual happenstance, as is explained below.

In the case of authority over gold production, three group interviews were carried out with gold diggers in Bakou. The first one gathered village representatives and sought to understand the types of rights that gold diggers exercised over gold resources, the other two focused on the relation between residents and gold diggers in Bakou with the mining company and the role of municipal authorities in mediating that relation. 70 interviews were carried out with a wide range of respondents including staff at governmental agencies at national level, staff from the transnational mining company operating in Séguénéga, and gold diggers throughout the commune, particularly those in Bakou. Together, these interviews sought locate the gap between statutory regulation over mining resources and those that play out on the ground in the commune of Séguénéga. In Bakou, interviews were mostly informal, but towards the last four months of the research I hired a research assistant and carried out detailed life histories of the most prominent gold diggers in Bakou. These life histories helped to analyse systematically the relations of recognition underlying the emergence of a specific institution of power over the production of gold resources.

The exercise of authority over the production of woodfuel resources was also investigated through a number of interviews across scales. Individual interviews with ministry staff, donors and policy advisors at the national level provided valuable insights into the woodfuel regime in Burkina and changes within that regime. On the ground, several interviews were conducted with the state forest agent overseeing woodfuel production and distributing authorisations over woodfuel extraction, and interviews were also conducted with his interlocutors in villages, particularly Sima. These interviews provided rich insights into the gap between legal provisions over the production of woodfuel and dynamics of extraction on the ground. The intersections between woodfuel production and decentralisation were examined through interviews with NGO and project staff. These aimed to confront various perceptions about the most appropriate authorities over woodfuel production in the context of the creation of a municipal forest. A number of 53 individual interviews were carried out across scales. Group interviews were also carried out, and the project implemented in the

commune of Séguénéga offered a good platform to constitute these groups. Group interviews were carried out with seven such committees that were visited at least twice. The villages were selected on the basis of their engagement with the project to reflect a diversity of attitudes towards the authorities overseeing the project. Two main themes were investigated in these group interviews: firstly whether and how the woodcutting authorisation delivered by the state was respected and felt appropriate, and secondly generating discussions about the kind of institution of power that ought to be in charge of the newly created municipal forests. The discussions that these questions generated provided rich insights into the various overlapping institutions exercising authority over woodfuel production, and provided clues as to the relation between these institutions of power, a topic that was further investigated through individual interviews with customary authorities, ordinary inhabitants and woodcutters.

A third dataset was generated through interviews with actors operating exclusively within the field of decentralisation. These actors include ministry and governmental agency staff at the national level, as well as various local authorities, such as municipal councillors, *préfet*, police, etc. At the national level these ‘experts in decentralisation’ generated important insights about the perceived ideal mandate of municipal authorities over the production of gold and woodfuel resources. At the local level, these authorities provided insights into the challenges associated with carrying out this mandate, specifically the challenging relationships with resource producers on the ground. Fourteen such individual interviews were carried out.

Key informants, caretakers and gatekeepers

In order to make sense of complex relations of authority in Bakou and Sima at the municipal level, key informants were crucial because they helped make sense of certain information that were collected on a day-to-day basis. I regularly visited local village representatives to whom I would present questions that were left pending from interviews or insight that my research assistant and I could not entirely make sense of, while always making sure that anonymity of informants was respected when issues were contentious. At the same time these informants also inevitably acted as gatekeepers and close association with some groups would sometimes translate into

loss of opportunity to associate with other groups (Campbell et al. 2006). For example, my dual association with municipal authorities and gold diggers sometimes conflicted. My relationship with key informants therefore needed to be closely monitored and I made sure to balance my involvement with the two embedded units, in Sima and Bakou, as well as in my case study, between different groups.

Recording data

Tape recording was very seldom used during interviews. It was used early in the research but it soon appeared to be a burden. As is the custom, interviews in mooré are always preceded by long greeting prologues that are crucial to establish the tone of the interview, and to make sure that a mutual relation of understanding is established with an informant. Using a tape recorder often compromised that rapport. Sometimes the interviewee would forget about the machine, but it also presented a waste of time. I was careful that interviews do not last more than an hour, unless the interviewee appeared as passionate as I was about the questions I asked. Given the long greetings, it was important that no time was wasted on recovering a comfortable conversational mode with interviewees. For French-speaking interviews with state officials, tape recording was found to equally disrupt the flow. While greeting periods were significantly shorter, the tape recorder seemed to make respondents uneasy when they did not know me; it seemed to represent evidence of a somewhat ulterior hidden motive of the research and I therefore refrained from using it as often as I could.

Choosing not to use a tape presented a challenge to record data. In order to approximate as close a recollection as I could from memory, two techniques were used: firstly, interviews and notes were transcribed immediately after interviews. I refrained from planning more than two interviews a day to give me time to transcribe them from memory; however the ability to transcribe straight away depending on the interview context. In Séguénéga for example an interview would often spill over into a lunch, a baptism, a wedding or a courtesy visit to a friend in a neighbouring village. In these cases recollection could be a challenge, and it was addressed by systematically spending some time with my research assistant transcribing the interviews— half a day was often spent in the field and half a day working either

separately at home or discussing interviews. In Ouagadougou I often worked on my own and followed the same timetable. We could not work every day however, especially in the dry season between March and June when temperatures can reach over 40 degrees Celsius. Illness is also often a cause for slowing work down, but we were relatively fortunate in this respect. Secondly, my interviews were very clearly semi-structured around a small number of themes. I would often have three or four core questions that I needed clear answers about, and more peripheral questions that either emerged during the interview or were drafted in advance.

At the same time, tape-recording proved very useful towards the end of the research when I knew exactly what kinds of questions I needed to ask, and the kinds of discussions I sought. In these cases, the interviews were carefully transcribed and analysed. The taped interviews conducted in mooré were translated into French (my mother-tongue) and transcribed by my field assistant, though some of them remained untranscribed. In these cases I have listened to tapes several times throughout the analysis and only partly transcribed the relevant passages.

Participant observation

Participant observation was a key technique employed throughout the research. The fact that I stayed in Séguénéga over extensive periods of time meant that there was never a time when I did not stay attuned to my research questions. There were many 'dead times' when insights came without being looked for, and these were crucial to make sense of relations of the exercise of public authority. Serendipitous situations unfolding through living everyday in Séguénéga were also often an occasion to conduct open-ended interviews with some officials who proved uncomfortable with formal interview contexts. For example most of the valuable insights I gained from municipal authorities were generated during informal courtesy visits at their homes.

In addition to observation from everyday serendipitous occasions, particular events in Séguénéga have been the object of more focused study.¹⁷ A number of ten events were analysed in total (see annexe 1). In the case of gold resources, these events were mostly related to local meetings regarding the industrial mining project. For example I

¹⁷ These key public events are listed in the appendix under 'participant observation'.

accompanied company staff on a field visit once, I was also present during a community consultation meeting between mining staff and gold diggers in Bakou. I was also invited to attend village-level meetings aimed to organise resistance to the mining project. These events provided rich and diverse insights into the relation between different institutions of power exercising authority over gold resources. In the case of forest resources I attended community meetings and training sessions organised by the NGO staff on the ground and related to the creation of ‘municipal forests’ with project staff and municipal officials. At the municipal levels, some of the most insightful public events were the municipal council meetings of which I attended two. In all these cases, I looked for the ways in which the different categories of actors (e.g. gold digger, municipal officer, mining company representative) related to one another, and on what grounds they related that way.

These insights were all recorded in field notes. Upon beginning fieldwork, I had decided to keep two separate diaries, one for research, one for personal reflections (Devereux and Hoddinott 1992). It soon became clear that this separation was untenable. This was mostly true at the start of research where research notes were always imbued with personal doubts about the validity of such and such observation. In total over 200 typed pages of notes were taken.

Written sources

Two categories of written sources were collected for this research. Firstly, some archival documents were used to inform about the genealogy of policy and secondly, contemporary legal and policy documents informing about statutory regulation. These were collected for the mining and forestry sectors as well as in relation to local administration and decentralisation policy in particular. Below I explain how I picked which documents to analyse.

Archival documents were mostly recovered from existing secondary data because spending time in the archives would have constituted a trade-off with the ethnographic approach taken here. In addition, secondary data could easily be found ‘from the desk’ through bibliographic searches, from either electronic or physical libraries. Archival documents on forest regulation and local administration under

colonial rule and after Independence are better represented in secondary sources than that pertaining mining regulation. This is ironic considering the latter is more recent, but this can also be explained by the fact that the mining sector only recently constituted an important dimension of the political economy of the Burkinabè state. I focused on sources that helped me trace the history of institutional power over gold and forest resources, as well as the formal changes of local administration in Burkina Faso. The secondary sources are always acknowledged in the analysis, and they are listed in the bibliography rather than the appendix as a way to acknowledge the fact that the archival sources I acquired is dependent on the ‘first round’ analysis undertaken by the authors of the secondary sources.

Secondly, in order to situate the gap between policy and practice, I also had to collect contemporary policy and legislation pertaining mining, forestry and local administration. These are mostly available on internet (<http://faolex.fao.org>). I picked the legislation and policy documents that helped me understand the cases that are enquired. For example, with regards to the mining sector, these included the legislation on small-scale artisanal mining, and exploration licenses, which helped an understanding of the relation between gold diggers and the large-scale mining investor in Bakou. A similar approach was taken in relation to forestry. I focused on the legislation framing the production of woodfuel at a national level, as well as policy documents that informed me about the extent to which this legislation is applied. With regards to local administration, I focused particularly on the legal and policy documents that pertain the intersection of mining and forestry with decentralisation. For example, I collected documents that pertained to the point of contact between license holders and local government in the case of mining, and I drew on policy documents that advocate the decentralisation of forest management in Burkina Faso.¹⁸

¹⁸ In the appendix, I have listed the 28 policy documents that were acquired in the field as ‘unpublished documents’, and the legislation collected appears at the bottom of the appendix under ‘laws and decrees’.

Analysis of resonance across processes

In this section I present the different analytical moves undertaken to operationalize the analytical framework. I articulate my presentation around my choosing an analytical approach that echoes with the previous discussion on the contribution of an embedded case study, and in relation to three analytical constructs that form my conceptual framework. The data collected was organised in three categories namely, forest, gold and decentralisation. This classification allowed me to keep in check gaps within the data, and the balance between the datasets (see appendix).

On the other hand this organisation meant that the cases were kept rather separate, and this hid a number of relations that could have better been highlighted between them. Analytically, and structurally, the embedded units could be presented as ‘stand alone’ cases to illustrate how decentralisation plays out in each case. Yet, given my theoretical commitments to authority as an empirical phenomenon, a ‘grounded theory’ approach was used, wherein patterns were teased out of the embedded cases that opened up the scope of what ‘decentralisation’ and ‘authority’ were assumed to be.¹⁹

I focus on ‘family resemblances’ in the way the data linked to the concepts. Unlike positivist research postulates, this case study research does not aim to be representative of the empirical world, but rather representative of the processes outlined by theory. This approach echoes the reflections of David Harvey (2004, 86-90) on this issue, specifically his emphasis on the necessity to move between ‘surface appearance’ and ‘ruling abstractions’. He suggested that such movement ‘entails viewing any particular event as a set of internalization of fundamental underlying guiding forces. The task of enquiry is to identify these underlying forces by critical analysis and detailed inspection of the individual instances’ (ibid, 91). In the case presented here, I focus on the role of regulation, recognition and their operation in the

¹⁹ There is also a structural implication for discovering these patterns. It would have been possible to write up the embedded cases as stand alone Chapters, but this carried the risk that the patterns would have been buried in each Chapter. Instead I chose to compromise and integrate these patterns within Chapters when they came across strongly (Chapters Five and Six), and to present the processes enquired in Chapters on gold and forest respectively when the patterns were not so clear (Chapters Seven and Eight). This structural choice was a difficult one to make.

political field of decentralisation (specified in Chapter Four) as ‘underlying guiding forces’ of the co-production of resources and authority under conditions of weak states. An analysis of the way the operation of underlying forces resonates across the cases of gold and forest in the commune of Séguénéga allowed me to sharpen the focus on decentralisation as a dynamics of state formation, and particularly to highlight the significance of the politics of autonomy as significant to the resource-authority nexus.

Resonance across the effects of statutory regulation were analysed in relation to the exercise of public authority in a historical perspective. My analysis was articulated around two particular historical ‘moments’. Firstly, I paid particular attention to changes before and after the point in time when these resources became enshrined in law. This happened at different points in time across forest and gold resources, which explains why the analysis starts in the 1980s in the case of gold, and at the colonial era in the case of forests. Secondly I examined specifically the changes in regulation that articulated the periods preceding and following the Revolution because this moment is a well-known historical shift in many areas of national policies (Hilgers 2012).

The fact that fieldnotes were typed and kept in one single document proved extremely valuable for the analysis of relations of recognition in the everyday. I considered using a software for qualitative data analysis but this proved not to be necessary and too time consuming to invest in. On the other hand I did create codes for the data, namely out of the various moments when the variety of actors claiming authority or access to resources intersected. These moments were often conflictual ones because these illuminated the relations of authority between various institutions of power (Le Meur 2002, Boone 2013). The same approach was used to analyse the data generated through the interviews.

Ethical considerations

Long term fieldwork, especially in a foreign and developing context is a tremendous research (and life) opportunity, but it is also fraught with more or less visible ethical

puzzles that mediate knowledge production from the process of research design to that of analysis and write-up. Having been inspired by feminist methodological debates, I summarise these challenges around three inter-linked issues that recurrently came up over the course of this study: dilemmas related to anonymity, power relations between myself and research participants, and the politics of representation.

Anonymity and ethics

Anonymising is often presented as a solution to an ethical problem, however it can be a problem in itself too (Bennett 2004). One that has preoccupied me until late in the analysis has been whether or not to anonymise the study area. This was carefully thought through. As noted in other studies, anonymity is a research choice rather than a requirement, and as a choice it impinges upon the will of research participants who may want to be identified with particular statements and actions rather than being silenced. In this research I was often unable to ask research participants permission to use their real name so they are always kept anonymous. A second issue related to anonymity, which is much less discussed in the methodological literature, is related to anonymising place in case study research, which is discussed below.

The research is ambiguously sensitive: on the one hand it does not put the life and work of respondents at risk, but on the other the empirical situation it examines does to some extent, in the case of gold mining. Partly for this reason, I chose to anonymise participants, but I felt that I would not be able to make the argument I had in mind regarding decentralisation without exposing individuals within the study area. The specific problem I was facing was that if the name of the municipality was not anonymised it would be easy to trace back the identity of individuals associated with particular institutions of power, especially in the case of institutions of power like the *préfet* or the mayor, where only one person holds such position at any one time. While the solution would be to refer to these institutions vaguely, as ‘local statutory official’ for example, sometimes making an argument required me to specify that a particular quote came from the *préfet*, and not from another ‘local bureaucrat’. Data in these cases were only presented when they did not compromise the moral and physical integrity of those respondents whose identity could be traced back from my decision not to keep the place anonymous. Other ethical reasons that informed me not to

anonymise the research area relate to risks of compromising the traceability of the research. In addition, the fact that I did not anonymise the area made me think harder about the presentation of results, particularly with regards to representation of research participants' views and motives. Ironically then, the ethical integrity of the research was kept by choosing not to anonymise the study area.

Power relations in the field

Power relations in the field were never settled. They were always shifting, and always a product of negotiations based upon moving baselines. On the one hand, clearly, having a return plane ticket to Europe in my back pocket, I was able to move between spheres of influence from those of the local gold mine to those of high-level bureaucratic offices, gave me some considerable leverage over the design of the research and its outcomes and over the production of knowledge. At some times, this gave me a distinct significant political 'upper hand' upon the majority of my research informants, but at other times, this also constituted a liability. This was particularly true in the context of contested access claims to gold resources between the small-scale and large-scale industrial mining actors when I was mobilised by small-scale miner to represent their interest towards statutory institutions. In this case when authorities and small scale miners had conflicting objectives towards resource production, data collection and production was limited by my ethical commitments including those of not to give false expectations to the former, while communicating to the latter that my aims were primarily to conduct research rather than activism. In the case of forest resources also, unequal power relations presented ethical dilemmas, rather than clear-cut ethical 'responsibilities': expectations were laid upon me to 'make a difference', which I felt were legitimate to address. For example at one time I was asked to draft a paper for the municipality to become the leader of a 'decentralised forest governance' national network. At the same time I knew that the direction that 'decentralised forest management' was going did not necessarily serve the interests of some of my respondents. In these cases, I strived to give the minimum needed before I was entirely sure about the results of my analysis and I am now writing a paper on the issue. These shifting power relations presented ethical dilemmas at several points of the research, which were kept in mind at all times and influenced greatly the direction of the analysis.

I lived in Séguénéga for several months at a time; I had my own house and a daily routine, and was developing close friendships that provided a healthy environment for me to conduct fieldwork. At the same time, these friendships were often made with individuals who were also valuable informants for my research and the boundaries between personal and fieldwork relations were often fluid as is often the case in ethnographic research (Banks and Scheyvens 2014). This means that some informants may be divulging information on the register of personal confidence that were nonetheless very valuable for my research. The ethical dilemma that emerged from this state of affairs was constantly kept in sight, and some of the stories shared have not been included in the thesis because they could not be used without compromising the identity of the individuals involved. At other times, when anonymity was not an issue some stories are used here in the anecdotal or hypothetical tone so to maintain the ethical integrity of the research.

The approach that seemed most appropriate to me at the time was to figure out what questions the respondents might have, and offer to think together about ways in which the research can help improve a pragmatic problem for participants that came out of the research. In some ways, this approach has been fundamental to the data collected. For example I would not have become interested in woodfuel had I not heard that it caused a problem in the area. I would not also have been interested in gold had I not understood that small-scale miners had no property rights and were being threatened of eviction. At the same time, researching these issues became problematic in instances when research informants had different and conflicting 'pragmatic problem' they suggested ought to be addressed. In these cases, I strived to convince informants that bringing to light these conflicts of interest was a worthy alternative 'pragmatic problem' to address although this approach was not always possible to uphold. Partial knowledge about the field and its real politik in the context of research on contentious resource politics can turn this approach into a double-edged sword, when it appears that 'services to help' have been offered to competing parties. The approach taken in this research was to always stand by the principle whereby service to one party would not harm or disadvantage the other, which in many cases meant that a service had to be 'scaled down' or declined.

The politics of knowledge production: positionality, presentation and representation

This research of course, like any other, is work in progress, and the firmness of tone in the analysis and grounded theorising is somewhat a rhetorical tool aiming to enhance clarity for the reader, and to provide something as solid as possible for the commentator to push against (Cupples 2014). However such firmness of tone also, even as a communication device, brings the writer face-to-face with questions about the definitiveness of analysis, and thereby also with concerns about the 'fittingness' of results. It is impossible to present my thesis to participants before submission, and only selected parts will necessarily be presented later on – e.g. careful steps taken towards preserving anonymity would be compromised and the procedure would actually be unethical to some extent though this is not unique to this case (van der Geest 2003). At the same time, while the work presented here is built around a particular scholarly theoretical argument, it can also be broken up into smaller pieces that may be more pragmatically used – a policy brief has already been written up on small-scale mining rights for example, and another one is being written about the lacunae in forest decentralisation. I would like to think that these initiatives vouch for both certain degree of result reliability and to some extent also for the integrity of the research as seen from a wider political economic angle on research in developing contexts. Rather than adopting a more pessimistic view that such engagement would reproduce the terms of an industry, namely development, which, like every other, relies upon the very inequalities that it seeks to redress, this standpoint is the temporary product of sustained engagement with the critical literature, but also and more conclusively, derives from sustained engagement with the beneficiaries of the industry. This standpoint is such that engagement with policy ought to stop when research informants stop desiring it, because the ethical commitment of the research is first and foremost lodged with informants rather than with any specific academic epistemic community.

The way I presented myself and presented the research fundamentally shaped the kinds of data I was able to collect, but also the kinds of dilemma I was able to see in the field. For example while conducting participant observation, my knowing about the fact that these events were happening was sometimes a challenge. I was dependent on my research informants to tell me about them, and this depended greatly on how I

had chosen to present the research. However the research had to be presented differently across the cases and across scales (Slater 1997). In the case of gold resources for example, my research spanned both an interest in the rights gold diggers and their claims to resources, as well as their relationship with municipal authorities and with the industrial mining investor. To each of these actors, I could not represent the research in the same way. I would have learned precious little about the relationship between miners and municipal authorities if I had presented my research as concerned primarily with decentralisation because they would not have been interested to talk to me at all. Conversely, in order to shed light on the way gold resources were governed at the national scale, it was sometimes relevant that I did not reveal the amount of time I had spent with miners in the field because *orpaillage* is a politically loaded topic in a context where a government generates most resources from an activity that fundamentally competes with the interests of its citizens. These discrepancies are not unethical, i.e. as a way to disguise my research topic, but they presented me with the challenge to deal with conflicts of interests in the field, and with that of representing them in writing. In the field, being consistent was a challenge, especially while in Séguénéga and across the two cases. This occasionally generated some amount of confusion especially when municipal authorities and international actors, such as the NGO and the industrial mine staff, saw me navigating between the two cases. When these confusions apparently emerged I did my best to explain as explicitly as I could the object of my enquiry. In the field, assurance as to the integrity and value of my research aims seemed to depend less on the way I presented my research than on the way I presented myself (Coffey 1999). In writing, I have strived to represent these tensions with in mind the aim that their protagonists would not disagree with my representations. In research on contentious resource politics, the presentation and representation of the research poses specific ethical issues that affect knowledge production, and were considered throughout the research.

Limitations of the study

Certain aspects to the research approach taken here have their limitations, which transpire in the analysis. Ethnographic research is often pursued as an approach to illuminate complex and situated processes, and the material generated is often rich,

diverse, and challenging to analyse. This is a difficulty that I also faced upon returning from the field and writing up (see also Cupples and Kindon 2014). Paradoxically I found that having gotten so close to the field, certain aspects were overlooked entirely. For example while I was relatively clear about the importance of shaft owners and *tiis nanamse* in the context of public authority over gold and forest resources and their significance in the process of decentralisation, I did not immediately realise the significance of woodfuel precisely, and the relative significance of gold and woodfuel in relation to state building. This meant that it did not occur to me to conduct in-depth interviews with woodcutters. This comes across in the list interviews conducted (see appendix) and in the second part of Chapter Six, in which the analysis of relations of recognition between overlapping institutions of power would have benefitted from more in-depth investigation in the ways in which woodcutters organise themselves as an institution of power.

It is important to note also that the secondary sources consulted to find archival material were remarkably scanty. For example little is known about the operation of forest agents in Burkina since Independence, and indeed no more is known in places where woodfuel production is 'informal' (see Chapter Five). The analysis offered in Chapter Five therefore is mostly based on the first hand data gathered in Séguénéga and with policy 'implementers' at a national scale, and these were cast against secondary sources on forest resource regulation in Burkina.

This does not negate the results altogether however. The existence of *tiis nanamse* as an institution of power that could be 'named' emerged from analysis conducted in the field that resulted from the triangulation of interviews in several villages in the commune of Séguénéga and with policy implementers outside Séguénéga, which granted confidence that such a group virtually exists. Nevertheless it also means that the comparative analysis that is presented in Chapter Six is unbalanced, whereby less is known about arrangement pertaining woodfuel than that over gold production on the ground.

One last shortcoming of the research is related to the embedded design. It can be argued that the patterns observed in the emergence and persistence of institutional

power is a result of contextual factors inherent to the municipality of Séguénéga. For example the argument about the politics of autonomy is built around the analysis of resonance between two cases of contentious resource politics respectively around the production of gold and woodfuel (see Chapters Seven and Eight), but given the research design, this could be attributed to place-based factors rather than the underlying significance of autonomy. More specifically, the fact that both conflicts opposed municipal authorities and local institutions of power over gold and forest resources means that these contentious politics emerge from certain qualities of the place, e.g. the history of land tenure relations in Séguénéga, or the particular relationship between Séguénéga and the villages of Sima and Bakou. In this sense it may have been preferable to study woodfuel and gold comparatively in two different communes. However the advantage of situating the study in one single area is to acquire in-depth data on relations of recognition, and this advantage would have been partially lost if two communes had been the object of enquiry. The methodological ‘tricks’ employed, i.e. following the policy and the multi-sitedness of the enquiry, confer robustness to the analysis across scales.

Conclusion

In this Chapter I laid out the methodological framework used to investigate the linkages between decentralisation and state formation through an analysis of the resource-authority nexus of gold and woodfuel in Burkina. A case study approach was taken to investigate the operation of regulation, and relations of recognition in the political field of decentralisation. Specifically, the approach taken here is to ‘follow the policy from below’. This approach aims to identify the gaps between policy vision and implementation, and sheds light on the institutions of power that emerge over resources within those gaps. The choice of an embedded case study is motivated by the will to go beyond analyses that focus on single resources, and so to sharpen the focus on relations of recognition that unfold under decentralisation. The embedded case study however does not mean to make claims of generalizability from Séguénéga, to other communes in Burkina. Rather, what is examined in the analysis is resonance between the comparative empirical relevance of the embedded cases in relation to the conceptual constructs of regulation, recognition and political field.

A number of limitations have also been raised. On the one hand the approach presented here has the advantage of generating deep knowledge about the resource-authority nexus studied, but on the other hand, it has obscured certain processes that only became clear once fieldwork was no longer possible. As such, the ethnographic approach taken here to enquire relations of recognition has also meant that distance from the data has been difficult to acquire and this has resulted in obscuring particular actors, namely woodcutters, from the dataset. In addition the research design has also been both an asset and a liability, in the sense that certain patterns have emerged from the field, and it has been difficult to take some analytical distance from these events and to focus on the processes underlying these events, as is the case of the conflicts mentioned in Chapters Seven and Eight. Acknowledging these limits hopes to highlight the robustness of the research process as a whole.

Chapter 4. The significance of autonomy in context

It is often argued that local governments do not make a difference. In many developing countries they are considered an empty shell because they lack resources and powers to make any sort of difference in the governance of local affairs. The fact that they lack resources has led to the argument that they are either the instrument or the victim of central governments on whom they often depend financially (Nelson and Agrawal 2008, Ribot, Agrawal, and Larson 2006). This thesis makes the contrary argument. I argue that it is precisely because they lack resources and powers that local governments make a difference. The fact that they are granted autonomy to manage local affairs, *and* that they are unable to enact autonomy because of their lack of funds and resources, creates tensions in the field of decentralisation that are specifically what grants this statutory reform its relevance, and by extension that of the state too (see Chapters Seven and Eight). In order to make this argument we must lay out the significance of autonomy in decentralisation, and how this principle mediates the relations between overlapping institutions of power within the resource-authority nexus.

In this Chapter One argue that autonomy constitutes the historical singularity of contemporary local governments in Burkina Faso. I argue this by giving some contextual elements about the Burkinabè decentralisation reform and how it plays out in Séguénéga. Specifically I review the nature and the contours (albeit, the limits) of the autonomy that local governments exercise in Burkina Faso.

In the first part of this Chapter, I trace the genealogy of local governments under decentralisation through the continuities and changes in local administration since the colonial era. The review brings to light three distinct political fields that have emerged and coalesced overtime. These are the ‘customary’, the ‘bureaucratic’ and the ‘democratic’ fields. Under decentralisation these three fields overlap spatially, which means that asserting authority for local governments in Burkina is a challenge. What distinguishes the ‘democratic field’ from the other two is the ability of local governments created under the democratic decentralisation to exercise discretionary powers locally: unlike earlier forms of local administration, local representatives are no longer paid by the central ministry, rather, they are encouraged to raise their own

resources.²⁰ This means that on paper they are autonomous, but in practice, they must raise their own funds. In other words, the exercise of discretionary powers is predicated upon the ability of municipal councils to exercise fiscal sovereignty and to become financially autonomous.

The second part of this Chapter takes the question of autonomy to the study area. The economic autonomy of local government is often thought to be unrealistic in poor contexts because local constituencies are unable to contribute to municipal budgets. I examine this claim empirically in Séguénéga, particularly in relation to the production of gold and forest resources in the commune. Specifically, I analyse the municipal budget in 2009 and the extent to which gold and forest resources contribute to it. This analysis reveals a contradictory state of affairs: on the one hand the commune of Séguénéga is reasonably autonomous economically, which indicates that local constituents are able to contribute to the municipal budget. On the other, while gold and forest resources constitute important elements of livelihoods in Séguénéga, they do not contribute at all to the municipal budget.

This curious state of affairs helped prompt my enquiry into how it is that local governments are able to *govern*. How do they raise resources and using what forms of authority to do so? Together these dimensions of autonomy form the backbone to my central argument about the way decentralisation contributes to state formation. On the one hand, the limits of economic autonomy suggest that there is a certain tension that underlies the relationship between local governments and local gold and forest resource producers. On the other hand, the overlap between political fields suggests that these tensions are likely to arise at the intersection of these fields and thereby also enhances the relevance of the state.

²⁰ Economic autonomy is not strictly a historical singularity of decentralisation reforms. Local colonial administrators called '*commandant de cercle*' were also encouraged to be economically autonomous within the constituency of the '*cercle*'. However the imperative of autonomy does differentiate contemporary local governments from earlier local administration since Independence.

The French in Moogo: the creation of the ‘customary field’

Contemporary local governments in Burkina have not emerged in a historical vacuum. In order to grasp the historical singularity of the decentralisation reform in Burkina Faso, we must trace its genealogy. The current features of decentralisation in Burkina today bear much resemblance to that of France where the territory and administration is also divided and organised into communes and *département* (first initiated in 1884). The French legacy however, has less to do with these semantic similarities than with the long lasting effects of the French territorial administrative organisation of its colonies.

The municipality of Séguénéga is situated in Moogo, a political territory inhabited mostly by Moaga society. The establishment of Moogo dates back to the 15th century from a series of conquests undertaken by moosé warlords who managed to establish supremacy over this space. From then on, Moogo evolved into a strong politically centralised society that continues to be ruled by Moaga aristocracy (Izard 2003). Moogo covers an important part, but not the entirety of, the territory that is known today as Burkina Faso. Historically, Moogo was constituted by four kingdoms: Yatenga, Wogodogo, Boussouma and Tenkodogo. The former two are the most ancient kingdoms and therefore also the most influential. These kingdoms and their boundaries are not strictly reflected in the contemporary administrative and territorial organisation of Burkina Faso, but they continue to carry some significance. The name ‘Wogodogo’ for example transformed into ‘Ouagadougou’, the capital of the country. Yatenga is today the name of one of the 45 provinces in Burkina. Séguénéga is one of the 13 communes included in the province of Yatenga.

Yatenga has an important place in the history of Burkina. Literally the name means ‘Yadega tenga’ or ‘the land of Yadega’. According to oral histories, Yadega was the eldest son of the founder of the kingdom of Wogodogo. Yatenga has been ruled by a king or ‘*naaba*’ (pl. *nanamse*) like the other three moosé kingdoms. Within each kingdom the *naaba* ruled through and over a number of smaller jurisdictions that are also headed by *nanamse*. This centralised and hierarchical political system continues to exist today. For example Yatenga still has a *naaba* who lives in the town of

Ouahigouya, the capital of the province of Yatenga, and he continues to play a role in appointing nanamsé at smaller jurisdictional levels like the village. Part of the reason why this system continues to be so relevant today is because when the French colonised West Africa, they ruled through, rather than against Moaga aristocracy.

On 17th August 1896 most of the area known today as Burkina Faso was brought under French rule. Ouahigouya was occupied first, soon before Ouagadougou (1st September) the current capital. The coloniser faced significant resistance but a peace Treaty (*Traité de Paix et de Protectorat*) was signed between Lt Voulet and *naaba* Koutou in Ouagadougou on 20th January 1897, while in Yatenga the fighting stopped three years later (Marchal 1980). The treaty placed the moosé kingdoms and adjacent spaces under French ‘protectorate’ that was named ‘Upper Volta’ in 1904. It was part of the wider *Afrique Occidentale Française* (AOF) that covered most of West Africa from nowadays Niger to Senegal.

Upper Volta at that time was a territory that encompassed Moogo but also a wider space ruled by a diversity of ethnic groups that had a different and less centralised political system than Moaga society. At that time, the centralised political system of the moosé kingdoms presented an opportunity for the coloniser to be able to control the population. Beucher (2010, 34) argues against a popular claim that moosé kings exercised feudal control over peripheral ethnic groups before French colonial rule: he shows on the contrary, that this feudal system was produced through a series of strategic administrative reforms undertaken by the French, which had the effect of strengthening a political hierarchy between ethnic groups, to the benefit of moosé aristocracy.²¹

The French colonizer had a limited number of French administrators at its disposal and the Moosé *nanamse* became an important crank in the colonial bureaucratic apparatus. Many *nanamse* were authorised as heads of the local administration in the

²¹ One example for this is the fact that colonial rulers decided to choose Ouagadougou, Mogho Naaba’s town of residence, as the capital of the territory. This choice came out as a reward to the Mogho Naaba in exchange for his manpower contribution to French First World War efforts. Another important town at the time was Bobo Dioulasso, situated closer to the plantation territories and therefore would seem like a better choice for the coloniser to erect a centre of power there, but that town covered an area populated by acephalous ethnic groups, which were much less ‘readable’ and ‘commandable’ for colonial rulers than the moosé were.

jurisdictions created under colonial rule (Salifou 2006). The territory of the AOF was divided into and ruled through jurisdictions called ‘*cercle*’.²² Upper Volta counted 10 ‘*cercles*’ and each was headed by a ‘*commandant de cercle*’.²³ Ki Zerbo (1972, 436) writes about the ‘*commandant de cercle*’ that ‘*he was at the same time judge, account keeper, engineer, police and security officer, military chief, education inspector, etc.*’. In this sense the ‘*commandant de cercle*’ was a powerful man, but a *cercle* covered a vast territory, and the French had scarce manpower at their disposal. In these conditions, colonial administration had to rely on existing elites to rule over its new found colony. Each *cercle* was therefore further divided into *cantons* and villages, and Moosé nanamsé were mobilised to govern at these two different levels (Maharaux 1995).

In Yatenga, a series of official documents (‘*circulaire*’) issued between 1917 and 1932 institutionalised the role of several members of the court of the Yatenga *naaba* as local administrators.²⁴ Their task was to collect the taxes that were instituted under colonial rule. These mainly involved a head tax, or ‘*impôt*’, as well as a percentage of the crops produced by farmers (Marchal 1980). In exchange for serving the colonial administration, Moosé nanamsé were remunerated: the *canton* chiefs received a fixed salary and a premium on output yields, and the lower-down village chiefs received a percentage of the ‘*impôt*’, a head tax levied by the colonial administration (Savonnet-Guyot 1985, Zahan 1961, Marchal 1980).²⁵

There are two contextual and interlinked factors that must be emphasised to understand the extent of political power that Moosé nanamsé were able to exercise

²² Beucher (2009, 13) defines the Cercle as ‘an administrative unit in French Africa. It corresponds more or less to a préfecture. *It is divided in offices and subdivisions, and at its head is a civilian or military «commandant» under the authority of the colonial lieutenant-gouverneur, whom in turn answers to the general governor of the AOF in Dakar*’ (my translation).

²³ This is true except for a brief interlude between 1918 and 1920 that characterises the transition period in which Upper Volta was created in 1919

²⁴ They are referred to as *ne somba*, or ‘good person’ (Zahan 1961: 5) or as *kombere* (Capron and Kohler 1975, 110, Izard 2003). In the kingdom of Yatenga however Savonnet-Guyot (1986, 110) suggests that power was more strongly centralized and the *naaba* did not rule through vassals.

²⁵ However their privileges only extended as far as their cooperation with the colonial administrators. The regime of *indigénat*, which legalised violence and distinguished the rights of indigenous subjects and French citizens (Merle 2004), was often invoked to put extra pressure on recalcitrant village heads. On the other hand *canton* chiefs have also been reported as abusive (Salifou 2006)

locally under the colonial administration in North Burkina and that help to understand the expansion of the ‘customary field’ into the administration under colonial rule.

First the expansion of the colonial administration happened at the time of two costly World Wars, which meant that the colonies were constantly encouraged to be both profitable to the metropole and self-reliant. While the colonial administration initially relied on military rule designed to exert political control over existing population, it then became geared towards economic planning and articulated around the goal to make the colonies ‘profitable’ for the Metropole. This happened in the mid-1910s when the First World War was being fought in Europe. After the war, and because of the costs it incurred on the metropole, the colonies were left to their own devices (Salifou 2006). It is in this context that Upper Volta was created in 1919 as a discrete territory within the AOF. In addition, at that time the metropole did not pay the salary of the colonial administrators on the grounds that colonial regions should participate in the development of the AOF (Salifou 2006). For this reason the reliance on Moosé nanamsé was central, because they were the ones that could ensure the flow of economic income.

Secondly, the different colonial regions set off on an unequal footing, and in as poor an agroecological region as Moogo, colonial requirements were felt particularly harshly (Marchal 1980). In the coastal colonies, like today’s Ivory Coast and Benin, the plantation economy was vibrant and generated substantial resources while the soudano-sahelian region of Upper Volta offered more limited auto-financing opportunities. In Northern Burkina particularly, income could only be produced in two ways: firstly through taxes on subsistence agriculture and some limited amount of cotton and groundnut production (Marchal 1980). Secondly, the area was (and still is) one of the most densely populated in the territory and North Burkina was used as a labour reserve for the plantation territories further south and along the Niger river, in the Office du Niger now situated in Mali (Kohler, Marchal, and Rémy 1971). Residents in Upper Volta were sent to work in plantation colonies on the Coast and moosé *nanamse* were mobilised to both levy taxes and choose people to be sent in the coastal colonies (Tourte 2005, 28-29, Zahan 1961).

This situation of course generated tensions between *nanamse*, their subjects and colonial administrators but the growing role of *nanamse*, now called ‘customary chiefs’ was depicted as a valuable move towards assimilation, and a way to recognise ‘indigenous’ power structures (Beucher 2009, 41). The following written report from a *commandant de cercle* in 1946 illustrates this:

‘We should not restore them [customary chiefs] within a dying feudal system, but institute them within a nascent Africa [...] and in this sense we should make them civil servants [fonctionnaires]. Making them local administrators does not mean that they should become automatons or abstract entities. Making them local administrators means that we should begin by determining their role not only in terms of their administrative status but also their social identity. It is in those terms that we should rethink with them – and for them as well as for us – the problem of the function of chief’

Robert de la Vignette, *commandant de cercle*, in Salifou (2006, 19), *my translation*.

This history shows that the mobilisation of *nanamse*, or customary chiefs, under colonial rule marked the creation and expansion of a ‘customary field’ through which local affairs were administrated. Below I examine the extent to which the inter-dependence between state administration and traditional power was upheld after Independence, and how the ‘customary field’ transformed as a result.

‘Customary chiefs’ and the modern independent state: an uneasy but necessary cohabitation

In the run up to independence, the significance of customary rulers in national and local administration in Upper Volta became increasingly contested by a growing political class. In this section I describe the ways in which the ‘customary field’ was repeatedly undermined by this political elite through attempts to create a ‘bureaucratic field’ independent from the ‘customary field’. These attempts however were only partially successful, and this gave rise to a dual, albeit *de facto*, co-existence of a ‘customary’ with a ‘bureaucratic’ field.

Tensions between customary rulers and political elites after Independence

In the 1940s the alignment of traditional Moaga aristocracy became a problem for an emerging urban-based political class, and the embeddedness of Moosé aristocracy in state administration became contested (Beucher 2009, 50). As early as 1947 traditional powers were already making claims to political representation over the colony of Upper Volta. For example the Yatenga Naaba and the Moogo Naaba Koom II wrote to the French President Auriol to request more autonomy for the colony of Upper Volta and this led to a more autonomous status for the colony as a *Territoire National d'Outre Mer* after (Ouédraogo 1995).

At that time, the political class was also gaining power, especially members of the *Rassemblement Démocratique Africain* (RDA) political party. Political parties in Upper Volta and the rest of the AOF were granted the right to form a '*conseil de gouvernement*' in the early 1950s, but this institution came in direct competition with customary chiefs in Upper Volta (Madiéga 1995). For example, on 17th October 1958 the Moogo Naaba attempted to establish a constitutional monarchy by force. The reason for this coup de force was not so much because traditional authorities wanted to recuperate power from the colonial ruler – the latter was clearly not going to be there for much longer – but rather because they felt threatened by the growing political power of the intellectual and political class that was expanding into the domain of administration. This expansion by the political class was marked by the creation of the *conseil de government*, authorised by the coloniser (Madiéga and Nao 2003).

This tension is also visible in the failure of an early attempt at decentralisation. Indeed Sawadogo and Sebahara (2004, 61-77) remind us that the decentralisation reform that was undertaken in Burkina Faso since 1991 is not new. In 1926, urban municipalities were first created under French colonial rule. They were semi-autonomous administrative entities under the name '*communes mixtes*' in Bobo Dioulasso and Ouagadougou, the two most important towns at the time. Their municipal council was composed of both nominated and elected members and they were called 'mixte' because the councils comprised both French 'citizens' from the Metropole, and

indigenous French ‘subjects’²⁶—the latter were often customary chiefs (Sawadogo and Sebahara 2004, Madiéga and Nao 2003). Other towns were extended the status of communes in 1955, including Ouahigouya, and their status changed between those of ‘full’ and ‘medium’ status, indicating that the reform was gaining ground (Champagne and Ouedraogo 2008, 3). In the late 1950s however this expanding attempt at decentralisation was brought to a halt. Following tensions between the mayor of Ouagadougou, a member of the Moogo Naaba family, and members of the RDA party, the municipal council of Ouagadougou was dissolved by the *conseil de gouvernement* that had been authorised by the coloniser.²⁷ All municipal councils were replaced by ‘delegations’ whose mandate was legislated in 1959 and whose members were appointed by the *conseil de gouvernement* (Sissao 1995).²⁸ The balance of power then shifted, from customary chiefs to the political elite organised in the *conseil de gouvernement*, which was increasingly in charge of national administration.²⁹

Persistence of the ‘customary field’

When Upper Volta became independent from France in 1960, several attempts were made to undermine customary chiefs within the national administration. However, these could not be upheld because of tensions between political elites.

One of the first laws that was passed under the First Republic instituted after independence aimed to re-organise territorial administration into ‘*collectivités territoriales*’ that would be headed by bureaucrats appointed by the central government, rather than by customary chiefs. However due to a divided and fast changing political landscape this arrangement could not be sustained. However under the first Republic governed by Maurice Yaméogo, who had been the president of the

²⁶ I use brackets here because I echo Mamdani (1996) and his analysis on the creation of dual citizenship under colonial rule whereby French natives had full citizen rights, while natives from the colonies had more limited citizen rights. Mamdani’s analysis is more elaborate than this, but it not necessary to go into its details here beyond the fact that customary aristocracy were those accepting the dual citizenship regime imposed under colonial rule as they were members of these municipal councils.

²⁷ In 1956, a law was passed that allowed the *Territoires d’Outre Mer* to elect their own government (loi no. 56-619 du 23 juin 1956, dite loi-cadre Defferre).

²⁸ Loi no. 041/59/AI du 9 Décembre 1959.

²⁹ It should be noted that there were important divisions within the political elite. The RDA was not the only party represented in the *conseil de gouvernement*, and these parties were strongly divided over issues of independence and federalism within the AOF (Madiéga 1995).

conseil de gouvernement, the privileges extended to the customary chiefs during the colonial administration were abrogated. For example the salary paid to *canton* chiefs was revoked in 1962.³⁰ Two years later another decree abrogated the renewing of chiefs once they died, and stipulated that chiefs ought to be replaced through elections, to which all inhabitants can become candidate and which is overseen by the *cercle* administrator.³¹

This political project to undermine traditional chiefs was difficult to implement because the administration did not have a provision for the replacement of the chiefs by another administrative entity, and the central government continued to be tied to ruling through chiefs. In 1965 for example, 37 villages were swapped from the *cercle* of Séguénéga to that of Gourcy without a clearly stated reason. Salifou (2006, 111) argues that this administrative manipulation was a way to create jealousies between *canton* heads in order to undermine their authority. In this sense, while central governments attempted to abrogate the privileges that had been extended to customary chiefs under colonial rule, in the absence of an alternative administrative organisation, it had to continue ruling through them to some degree.

These attempts to short-circuit the ‘customary field’ were further undermined by political divisions within the government of the first Republic. The second republic was formed when the government headed by the Lieutenant-Colonel Lamizana was overthrown in 1966. This latter regime took some distance from political elites while getting closer again to traditional chiefs. Lamizana for example dissolved all political parties and instituted a military regime instead, where a third of the ministries were headed by military leaders (Beucher 2008, 55). Under the second republic also, customary chiefs were reinstated, albeit with caution. For example, they were again recognised as important elements of local administration in the same way as they were in 1955 under colonial rule, but the chiefs at provincial and *canton* level were chosen by higher level Moosé nanamsé, and the village chiefs were chosen by the local civil servant heading the *cercles* at the time. In addition in 1971, CFA 12 million were set apart to remunerate traditional chiefs. Syndicate organisations contested this

³⁰ Décret n°189/PRES/INT du 08 Juin 1962.

³¹ Décret n° 326 PRES/IS/DI du 28 juillet 1964, relatif au mode de désignation des chefs de village, J.O de la République de Haute-Volta, 30 juillet 1964.

measure but their plea was ignored, and in 1973 a decree legislated a monthly salary for chiefs (Marchal 1980). At the same time, while the chiefs were recognised again, their mandate was not codified (Salifou 2006), which shows the caution exercised in their re-instatement. What this shows is that the authority of chiefs continued to be a *de facto* element of the way the independent state of Upper Volta rules over its territory, which gave way to the persistence of the ‘customary field’ after Independence.

The parallel emergence and expansion of a ‘bureaucratic field’

At the same time as the ‘customary field’ was maintained, growing concerns over ‘development’ and ‘modernisation’ brought up imperatives to elaborate technical expertise in natural resource production and expand that expertise throughout the country. To this effect, two additional territorial components appeared in the name of development.

The first one was the creation of new territorial circumscription called the *Organes Régionaux de Développement* (ORD). These were created in 1965 and overlapped the territories that were previously delimited as *cercles* (Bagré et al. 2011, 77-82). These were mainly concerned with carrying out agricultural extension work as a way to modernise agriculture and increase productivity output, through large scale cash crop production such as cotton, and later rice and wheat in the Volta valleys (see Bethemont, Faggi, and Zoungrana 2003 on the Sourou valley). The second territorial component was created a little later than the ORD. In 1974 the Lamizana government adopted a territorial reform that divided the country into *départements* that would have an administrative function to complement the technical function of the ORDs. At that time, 11 *départements* were created and overlapped the limits of the ORDs (Tallet 1989). The projects undertaken through the ORD were vastly dependent on external funding (Speir 1991), and so the mandate of the *département* was mainly one to facilitate these externally funded projects.³²

³² The ORD also enjoyed a certain amount of autonomy however. For example they operated certain control over the buying price of cereals, but it is estimated that the ORD only controlled 15% of the cereals being commercialised at the time (Labazée 1985, 15).

This period was crucial in that it built a strong ‘bureaucratic field’, which strived to further undermine the ‘customary field’.³³ This territorial organisation further expanded in the late 1970s and 1980s. The *départements* headed by a *préfet* were further divided into *sous-préfecture* headed by *sous-préfets*, also appointed bureaucrats by the centre. At that time for example, Séguénéga became one of the four *sous-préfecture* within the *département* of North Ouahigouya (Marchal 1980: 13).³⁴ This territorial arrangement through intensified bureaucratisation was crucial. It provided an alternative state-society interface that customary power had until then, and this arrangement was maintained and expanded further later on.

This period of intense bureaucratisation unfolded at the time of internal political divisions within the political elite of the second republic (Sawadogo and Sebahara 2004). In 1977 a new constitution was adopted by referendum and Lamizana was overthrown in 1980. At that time, the salary of chiefs was again abrogated, while the territorial organisation into *department* was maintained. However, because of political uncertainties the territorial reform did not expand and for a while the *départements* continued to cover large areas that were difficult to administrate only through the *conseils départementaux*. In this sense the *conseils départementaux* continued to rely on the traditional chiefs that ruled over the smaller *canton* jurisdictions. This contradictory state of affairs is illustrated in a decree from 1981 that forbade any overlap between customary chiefs and *conseils départementaux*.³⁵ As Salifou (2006: 119) noted, this measure was contradictory: on the one hand, the power of chiefs was no longer recognised legally since the payment of chiefs’ salary had already been abrogated; on the other hand the fact that a law needed to be formulated to make sure that chiefs did not occupy administrative function is a proof to their continued relevance within local administration and to the persistence of the ‘customary field’ in the context of an expanding ‘bureaucratic field’.

³³ At first, the *département* ought to have been headed by an elected ‘*conseil départemental*’ that would enjoy some financial autonomy. These elections and financial autonomy provisions were never carried out in practice however, for fear that elections would bring customary chiefs back in power, at the head of the ‘*conseils départementaux*’. Instead, they were headed by ‘*délégations spéciales*’ with a *préfet* at their head, a civil servant appointed by the central government (Sawadogo and Sebahara 2004: 64-65).

³⁴ See the 1975 census: <http://ecastats.uneca.org/aicmd/Portals/0/CensusDocs/002-854-CB-13.pdf>

³⁵ Decree no. 81 0354/CMRPN/PRES du 5 août 1981 fixant les limites de compétence territoriale entre autorités coutumières et autorités administratives.

In the first couple of decades after independence therefore the interface between the state and populations changed in a number of ways: firstly, the power of traditional chiefs that had been instituted under the colonial indirect rule was becoming problematic. Several attempts to undermine them were made but with partial success. Secondly, state territorial administration became more complex, with the creation of the ORD and the *départements* that were headed by a commission of state agents appointed by the centre. In the 1980s national and local administration was characterised by the co-habitation of an enduring *de facto* ‘customary field’ and an expanding *de jure* ‘bureaucratic field’ that were not totally divorced from one another.

The *Conseil National de la Révolution*: against ‘feudal chieftaincies’

In 1982 the Lamizana government was overthrown by Jean-Baptiste Ouedraogo. The latter appointed as Prime Minister a military Captain called Thomas Sankara who was becoming very popular at the time. As a fervent ‘anti-imperialist’ Sankara was however quickly considered too radical and a threat to the Ouédraogo military government so he was soon arrested and imprisoned. Impressive popular mobilisation grew against his arrest however, and gathered an important number of people around popular marches in many cities. Thanks to this popular support Sankara, was freed and in 1983 he overthrew the Ouédraogo government along with three other military officers, including Blaise Compaoré, the current president of Burkina Faso. Together the four officers set up a military regime of revolutionary inspiration that was called the *Conseil National de la Révolution* (CNR). ‘Upper Volta’ was renamed ‘Burkina Faso’, meaning ‘the land of honest sons and daughters’, and a radical political economic project was developed including the institutionalisation of a one-party rule, the eradication of all privileges of traditional authorities as well as increasing the surveillance of syndicates and civil society association activities affiliated with earlier political parties (Otayek 1985).

The rule of the CNR was short-lived (1984-1987) but it had profound impacts, particularly in solidifying the ‘bureaucratic field’ over the ‘customary field’. There were two major reforms undertaken at the time that considerably disrupted the post-

colonial reliance on traditional chiefs to govern at the interface between state and society: firstly, the nationalisation of land ownership, secondly the creation of local revolutionary committees in all villages called the *Comités de Défense de la Révolution* (CDR). Below I elaborate on these two measures.

‘La terre à ceux qui la cultivent’: land reform under the Revolution

The first major transformation during that time was the land and agrarian reform that nationalised the ownership, allocation and distribution of land in Burkina Faso. This measure spilled much ink, despite the fact that it had little pragmatic effects (Sanou and Hochet 2012). The reason why it was so widely written about is that it considerably transformed attitudes towards customary power. In order to understand how this is so, we must spend a little time explaining some general principles about land tenure systems in Burkina. They vary in important ways depending on the ethnic context in which they are found, but some general principles can be drawn out briefly to help understand how the land and agrarian reform significantly undermined the ‘customary field’.

In Burkina, and in large parts of West Africa, settlements are often governed by two types of authorities: the land priest, or *chef de terre*, and the village chief, or *chef de village*.³⁶ The former has authority over land and natural resources and he is the authority in charge of rituals related to land productivity. He is consulted when important land attributions or decisions about natural resource management (large plantation of trees, fencing of an area, etc.) take place. He is also systematically consulted in the instance of conflicts related to land and natural resources. The village chief on the other hand has authority over men and political affairs (Sawadogo and Stamm 2000, Kuba and Lentz 2006, Jacob 2007).

In Moogo, and in other societies elsewhere too, the land priest is always a member of a family lineage that first settled in the area (*teng biise*), while the village chief (*teng*

³⁶ This dual traditional headmanship only really occurs in areas that have been the object of conquest by certain groups. It is often the case when the political organisation of a ‘conquering’ group is highly centralised and hierarchical, as is the case of Moaga society (Lentz 2006). In some places where centralised societies have not sought to conquer settlements, villages continue to be headed solely by a land priest, but these are an exception.

naaba) is the holder of the lineage that colonised an area previously inhabited by ‘first-comers’ (Savonnet-Guyot 1985). Village chiefs on the other hand are often members of Moaga aristocracy that conquered large parts of what is known today as Burkina Faso in the 15th century. The Moaga conquest strategy had been to retain the authority that existing occupants exercised, and confine their power to the domain of land and natural resources, which is how this dual authority system has emerged and has been retained over time (Izard 2003). It is important to mention that these principles are generic and do not apply everywhere; for example in Bakou, one of the villages where this study took place, the settlement is only inhabited by two lineages, and both lineages are of the hunter ethnic group, which means that neither lineage claim land of village chieftainship.³⁷ So while these principles are commonly found, there are exceptions.

What is almost always found on the other hand, is the principle of anteriority (Lentz 2006). Regardless of whether a settlement is headed by either land priest or village chief, or both or neither, the family lineage who settled first in an area always have the most authority over decisions of land and natural resources. The land priest is not systematically consulted when an agricultural field is ‘opened’ because each lineage within a settlement has some discretionary powers over certain territories that have been ‘handed’ by the first coming lineage represented by the land priest. However if a conflict opposes two land claimants, each claimant will typically try to establish that he or she was the first to occupy that land, and these claims will be typically arbitrated by the land priest, or by the ‘earlier coming’ lineage that is supposed to have handed that piece of land (Saul 1993, Le Roy, Karsenty, and Bertrand 1995).

Here we see that land systems are deeply embedded in political principles that are entrenched in the customary field, and inversely the relevance of customary chiefs is deeply embedded in their authority over land and natural resource. It is then easy to imagine the significance of the land nationalisation reform: by taking away the ability of chiefs to make decisions about land allocations, the reform also took away an important part of their power and legitimacy. Of course the reform was never implemented fully, though it did result in significant waves of confiscation from

³⁷ Bakou has a population of over 400 inhabitants, and therefore the size of the village is not the reason for the lack of clear chieftainship.

customary authorities (Labazée 1985). In rural areas, the land reforms clearly had little effect given how fundamental land systems are in an agrarian society, but it did demonstrate that chiefs were fallible, and that their power could be contested by the state.

In order to carry on this anti-customary political project, another crucial reform was adopted by the CNR, namely, replacing the *canton* system that had endured despite the efforts to undermine it via territorial and legal reforms since Independence. This is reviewed below.

Comités de Défense de la Révolution: *Deepening the reach of the ‘bureaucratic field’*

The second important measure taken by the CNR regime was to create revolutionary local-level committees in all villages called the *Comités de Défense de la Révolution* (CDR). These committees, aimed to replace the *canton* institution. With the creation of *départements*, the *préfecture* and *sous-préfecture* continued to rely on customary chiefs that were appointed over the *canton* jurisdictions. With the creation of CDR committees in each village, the *canton* jurisdiction became effectively redundant, and by extension, so did the authority of customary chiefs. As such, the CDR came to replace the role that had been filled officiously by traditional authorities until then (Somé 2003, 242).

The way CDR committees were constituted was an important instrument to short-circuit the control of customary chiefs (Savonnet-Guyot 1985). In rural areas, the CDRs were made up of a committee of nominated *délégués*: each village ‘quarter’ was represented by one *délégué* in each village. Most villages in Moaga society are organised into constellations of homesteads, or compounds, that are regrouped according to family lineage that have control over their own village quarter in each village.³⁸ In Moogo, where Séguénéga is situated, quarters are known as *sakse* (sg.

³⁸ This organisation varies across ethnic groups in Burkina. The country counts a diversity of ethnic groups and these tend to occupy reasonably discrete, albeit agreed upon but not officially delimited, geographical areas in Burkina Faso. The Moosé are the majority ethnic group and occupies a large part of central Burkina Faso.

saka) in mooré, and they are under the authority of lineage heads.³⁹ The lineages of customary chiefs, either land priests of village chiefs, are usually the most powerful lineages in a given village, so choosing one CDR representative for each saka avoided the concentration of CDR power into the hands of the lineages of customary chiefs. This way, the CDR made sure that customary chiefs no longer monopolised power at the interface between rulers and ruled, and every saka was equally represented. As ought to be expected, a clear separation between the CDR and the traditional chieftaincy was hard to maintain, and in some instances members of the traditional aristocracy ‘infiltrated’ the CDR (Salifou 2006: 120). However, a close watch was kept over the issue, and the CDR that had been ‘infiltrated’ or constituted by traditional authorities were systematically dissolved (Labazée 1985: 13). This way, the constitution of CDR in each village considerably undermined the significance of the ‘customary field’ at the interface of state and society.

In addition to undermining the ‘customary field’, the way CDR committees were articulated to the wider national territorial framework contributed to anchoring the articulation of state and society into the ‘bureaucratic field’. At the time of the CNR rule, 30 *provinces* were created and many localities were erected as further *départements* and the CDR helped expand and deepen the territorial organisation of the ‘bureaucratic field’ created a few years earlier (Sawadogo and Sebahara 2003: 65-66).⁴⁰ The role of the CDR was diverse and wide-ranging. They were famously in charge of the *Tribunaux Populaires* that acted as local popular judicial organs focused on denouncing immoral acts by way of public trials. In this role, they were very powerful, and sometimes ruthless, to the extent that it was reported at the first national conference of the CDR congress in Ouagadougou that ‘*thieves and other delinquents prefer to be taken to the police rather than to the CDR office*’ (Martens 1989: 101). In addition, the CDRs helped to elaborate and carry out the *Programme Populaire de Développement* that framed public polity at the provincial and

³⁹ The *délégués* however are chosen on the same basis as the CDR that is, among members of each family lineage/quarter.

⁴⁰ At that time, every significant town becomes a ‘commune’ that was headed by a popular assembly that is made up of the CDR members (Zatu ANIV-37/FNR/PRES). However I do not elaborate on this here because the ‘communes’ created at the time were still headed by the CDR, and therefore ruled through the bureaucratic field, while the contemporary commune are ruled through the democratic field, described later on in this Chapter.

departmental levels (Labazée 1985: 12). As such the CDRs contributed to expand the ‘bureaucratic field’.

The nationalisation of land and the institutionalisation of CDRs were therefore two reforms that effectively undermined the significance of the ‘customary field’ at the interface of state and society, while expanding that of the ‘bureaucratic field’. At the same time, the CNR rule was short-lived – in fact it could be argued that one of the reasons why it was short-lived is precisely because of the heavy handed treatment of the ‘customary field’ at that time. In what follows I dwell on a final period of interest here related to the creation of contemporary local governments. Below I show that the multi-party democracy that was adopted in the early 1991 has led to yet another reform that not only adds a new field, but also reinstates the customary one while retaining the ‘bureaucratic field’.

Multi-party democracy: adding in the ‘democratic field’

In 1987 Thomas Sankara was assassinated and one of his acolytes, Blaise Compaoré was brought to power. Although many suspect that Compaoré commanded the group of military officers who assassinated Sankara, Compaoré managed to keep his position at the head of the country, and he has kept this position as head of state until today. When Sankara was assassinated, the CNR was overthrown, and Compaoré created and led a political party called the ‘*Front Populaire*’ that ruled over the country during a political transition period eloquently termed ‘Rectification’ (Otayek 1992). Thus named, this period marked a critical turn away from revolutionary ideological objectives and towards the adoption of political and economic reforms advocated by Bretton Woods institutions including Structural Adjustment Programs and political reforms of ‘multi-party democracy’. The *Front Populaire* initially claimed to strive towards an alliance of revolution and democracy (Otayek 1992), but essentially the revolutionary objectives set through the nationalisation of land and the institutionalisation of CDR were both undermined. This had the effect of reviving the ‘customary field’ within local administration.

Firstly, the land reform was revised a couple of times (RAF 1991; 1996), and it implicitly re-instated the role of customary chiefs. In the revised versions, customary chiefs are not re-instated within local administration, and in fact the *canton* jurisdiction seems to have resolutely died under the hammer of the CDRs. On the other hand, they are implicitly invited back into land governance: the revised texts no longer forbid them to exercise authority over the allocation of land and natural resources.⁴¹ As such the move towards democracy seems to operate more in favour of the ‘customary field’ than of the revolutionary ‘anti-customary’ objectives.

Secondly, under the period of ‘Rectification’ from 1987, local administration reform re-valued to status of customary chiefs. The CDR had become unpopular in some circles and they were renamed *Conseils Révolutionnaires*. The latter were appointed in the same manner as the CDR, choosing one member for each village quarter, or *saka* in Moogo, effectively keeping customary chiefs at bay.⁴² At the same time one crucial rupture from the CNR rule in the direction of democracy was the decision taken by the *Front Populaire* to discontinue the one party rule that applied under the CNR regime (Otayek 1992: 97; Otayek 1989; Labazée 1985). This of course fundamentally transformed the nature of state-society articulations locally. The legitimacy of the CDR was essentially based on the articulation of state power around a one-party rule under the CNR, and with the abolition of the one-party rule, they became inappropriate and redundant. The *Conseil Révolutionnaires* therefore did not last long (Natielse 2013, 62-73).

What this means however is that they had to be replaced. In 1991 a new Constitution was adopted by Referendum, and it marked the start of the Fourth Republic. Below I discuss two overlapping, and indeed intermingling, initiatives that have been rolled out at the local interface of state and society under the Fourth Republic.

⁴¹ It should be noted that the land and agrarian reform has been recently revised again (GoB 2009) and in a way that grants even more recognition to customary authorities. This recent revision specifies that village territories can be codified locally through a tool called the ‘*charte foncière*’ that delimits the boundaries of landholders and that requires the signature of customary chiefs to become valid [see Jacob (2013) for stimulating discussion of the possible trajectories of change]. This revision is not discussed in further details here because it is scarcely applied and it is unclear what the results will be in terms of a reinstatement of the customary field.

⁴² Zatu AN VII-10/FP-PRES du 12 Octobre 1989.

I first review the way that the *Programme National de Gestion des Terroirs* (PNGT) modified the interface between state and society to show how this initiative resurrected the ‘customary field’, while being totally disarticulated from the ‘bureaucratic field’. Secondly I present the ways that the democratic decentralisation reform added in a new political field, the ‘democratic field’, which spatially overlaps with the bureaucratic one. This review allows me to then move on to show the significance of autonomy in a context where the three fields overlap, specifically in the commune of Séguénéga where the study takes place, as a way to make an argument about the significance of autonomy under decentralisation.

PNGT: International development and the return of the ‘customary field’

As noted above, International Financial Institutions played an important part in the roll out of political and economic reforms under the Fourth Republic (Labazée 1985). The input from international donors is particularly clear in the *Gestion de Terroirs* programme. Firstly, this programme is entirely funded by the World Bank (Bassett, Blanc-Pamard, and Boutrais 2007, Painter, Sumberg, and Price 1994). It has been rolled out in a series of 10-year phases starting in 1992, and renewed subsequently in 2002. Secondly the input of IFIs is clear from the fact that the programme is not unique to Burkina Faso; similar programmes have also been implemented in other countries such as Mali, Niger and Ivory Coast that also benefit from similar funding. Much has been written on these programmes, particularly in relation to land formalisation, and I will not review the entire literature here (Faure 1996, Ouédraogo 2002, Engberg-Pedersen 2003, Batterbury and Fernando 2006, Gray 2006). What is of particular interest, however, is the ways in which this programme has come to patch up the gap left empty at the interface of state and society after the revocation of the CDR and the subsequent redundancy of the *Conseils Révolutionnaires*.

The *Programme National de Gestion des Terroirs* (PNGT) is a typical community-based natural resource management initiative that aims to ‘rationalise’ resource management at the village level and as such its effects have been heterogeneous while

being standardised (Painter, Sumberg, and Price 1994).⁴³ It has not been equally rolled out over the territory, mainly because some areas benefitted from the programme from its earliest inception, while others only benefitted from the second phase that started in 2002. It is also heterogeneous and place-based so that the actions implemented on the ground vary greatly from place to place. However one common feature that has ran throughout the programme has been the erection of village-level development committees (*Comités Villageois de Gestion des Terroirs*, CVGT) that are ‘responsible for the management of community infrastructures, village woodlands, pastures, fauna and natural resources in general’ and ‘in the context of fulfilling their duties, CVGTs are, at village level, specifically responsible for allocating, evaluating and withdrawing land from the national domain’. The extent to which these duties are carried out in practice is an important question, but what is relevant here is that the CVGT became a significant element of territorial organization under the Fourth republic, particularly in rural areas where the program was being rolled out. After the ‘Rectification’ period and after the *Conseils Révolutionnaires* were revoked, the local interface between state and society has been relatively vacant, and it has been filled by CVGTs in many rural areas.

Two observations can be made here about the CVGT in relation to this discussion about the emergence of different political fields. The first observation connects the CVGT to the bureaucratic field. Here it is significant that international donors play an increasingly important role in the territorialisation of national space: CVGTs are created and expanded through direct links between global donors and local actors through a dynamics that can be characterised as a ‘glocal’ territorialisation process (Swyngedouw 2001). What is even more significant however is that this ‘glocal’ territorialisation process is rolled out without any connection with existing national territorial frameworks: the CVGT are an interlocutor between donors and beneficiaries, but they do not have any administrative functions, nor are they

⁴³ The term ‘*terroir*’ has no exact English equivalent but refers to a landscape, or its bio-physical characteristics, in connection with its meaning as socio-cultural heritage and patrimony. The concept of *terroir* used in this context was inspired by the French geographical and agronomic research traditions (e.g. Marchal 1983 for Burkina Faso), which aimed to connect human and ecological diversity from the perspective of a locally meaningful village territory. In turn, this socio-geographical approach was appropriated by development planners in the 1990's age of decentralisation and 'Environment and Development' initiatives, and inspired the village land management approach (*gestion de terroir*) (Turner 1999, Painter, Sumberg, and Price 1994).

accountable to either provincial or *département* levels of administration (Painter et al. 1994). In this sense it can be argued that the PNGT marks the institutionalisation of the interface between state and society away from the ‘bureaucratic field’.

The second observation that is of interest concerns the ‘customary field’. On the one hand, the CVGT do not confer any explicit power to customary chiefs, on the other hand, and unlike the CDR, they do not forbid customary chiefs from being members of CVGT or even controlling the appointment of their representatives, which should be designated ‘in accordance with the local historical and socio-cultural customs’.⁴⁴ As noted by Ouédraogo (2006, 18), this means that customary chiefs will be involved in cases where they are recognised by their constituents as relevant authorities in the management of natural resources, and particularly in the context of development initiatives that tend to mobilise chiefs whom are generally considered ‘legitimate’ interlocutors by actors from the development industry (see also Sanou (2008). Effectively then, the institutionalisation of CVGTs at the interface of state and society not only constitute a retreat of the ‘bureaucratic field’, but also advances of the ‘customary field’.

Thus, while the PNGT has not claimed to reform local administration, it has done so *de facto* with the creation of CVGT. Interestingly, the CGVT have tended to be elected in the same way as the CDR, but they have also opened up a new opportunity for customary powers to regain a role in local administration, thereby reviving the relevance of the ‘customary field’ at the interface of state and society. Below I examine the second important initiative that has been instituted under the Fourth Republic, which is the process of ‘*communalisation intégrale*’ that characterises the democratic decentralisation reform in Burkina.

‘Communalisation intégrale’: the creation of the ‘democratic field’

The contemporary democratic decentralisation reform was begun as soon as the new Constitution was adopted in 1991. It provisioned for the creation of ‘*collectivités*

⁴⁴ Décret d'application N°97-054/PRES/PM/MEF du 06 février 1997 portant modalités d'application de la loi portant RAF au Burkina Faso (art. 138, 139 and 140).

territoriales’, or territorial jurisdictions,⁴⁵ that are ruled through ‘democratic participation’ throughout the country (GoB 1991, art. 143 and 145). As early as 1993, a series of laws were adopted to reframe territorial organisation around democratic objectives and the first communal elections took place in 1995.⁴⁶ Instead of reviewing the dense and vast spectrum of laws adopted at that time, here I concentrate on two aspects of the reform that inform my analysis of the relation and transformation between the different political fields reviewed so far. Specifically I show that the creation of the ‘commune’ and the municipal councils marked the emergence of a discrete ‘democratic field’ that is articulated territorially, especially since the ‘*communalisation intégrale*’ in 2006 that extended democratic decentralisation over the entire national space. Secondly I examine how the ‘democratic field’ relates to the other two fields reviewed so far.

Provinces further expanded under the Fourth Republic. In 1995 the most populated *départements* were split so that the country became divided into 45 provinces and 340 *départements*. At that time a number of the most urbanised *départements* were also turned into ‘*collectivités territoriales*’ through the election of municipal councils in 33 *départements*, which effectively also became urban communes. This first experience was positively appraised and led to another set of laws in 1998,⁴⁷ and to a second round of municipal elections in these same urban communes in 2000.⁴⁸ The mandate and accounting regime is further codified by law in 2004 (*Code Général des Collectivités Territoriales*; GoB 2004) and in 2006 democratic decentralisation

⁴⁵ This term does not easily translate into English, and this is why it is first presented in French here. The uneasiness may be traced back to the different historical trajectories of political representation in each the French and British traditions. The term jurisdiction is preferred to that of ‘authority’ because like the word ‘*collectivité*’ in French, the term ‘jurisdiction’ in English refers to a moral body, rather than a physical body of persons or a relation between them, as is the case for the word ‘authority’.

⁴⁶ The number of laws adopted at that time is impressive (see Sebahara and Sawadogo 2004: 68). These laws mark the commitment of the government to the process of democratisation and decentralisation though it is also making it increasingly illegible to those receiving these powers.

⁴⁷ These refined issues related to the range of responsibilities handed to the communes, the way its deliberative organ is elected, the resources they dispose of and ways they can raise their own resources through taxes. An exhaustive list can be found in (Sawadogo and Sebahara 2004).

⁴⁸ In 2001 the deconcentrated territorial administration was further supported through the creation of 13 regions that are headed by both an appointed civil servant (*Gouverneur*) and by a deliberative organ that is elected democratically (*Conseil régional*). While this level of administration is technically part of democratic decentralisation its mandate remains vague to this day.

extends to the entire country with the elections of 351 municipal councils (divided between 49 urban, and 302 rural communes).⁴⁹

The political field in which the municipal council is constituted and operates is distinct from the bureaucratic field. Firstly, the *provinces* and *départements* are generally referred to as ‘deconcentrated institutions’ because they are headed by bureaucrats or civil servants who are appointed centrally by the Ministry of Decentralisation and Administrative Territorialisation (MATDS). Thus a *haut commissaire* governs a province, and each *département* is headed by a *préfet* who is accountable to the former. Secondly, the municipal council is made up of councillors elected every five years. In each administrative village a number of candidates are put forward to represent the list of each major political party, and two municipal councillors are elected through the ballot for each village.⁵⁰ These councillors sit at the municipal council, which ought to meet at least four times a year.

At the village level a committee has also been created (*Comité Villageois de Développement*, CVD), which replaced the CVGT. This committee is not elected but nominated. The CVD is not a deliberative organ. It is the ‘transmission belt’ between the municipal council and populations. Its role is to carry out the initiatives identified by municipal councillors, and it is therefore effectively under the authority of the deliberative organ that is the municipal council (see figure 2 below).⁵¹ In this sense, the municipal council creates a new political field whose legitimacy is founded upon electoral politics. The ‘*communalisation intégrale*’ thus created a ‘democratic field’ that is relatively discrete from the ‘bureaucratic field’ since the municipal council is accountable to neither the *préfet* nor the *haut commissaire*, but to its electors.

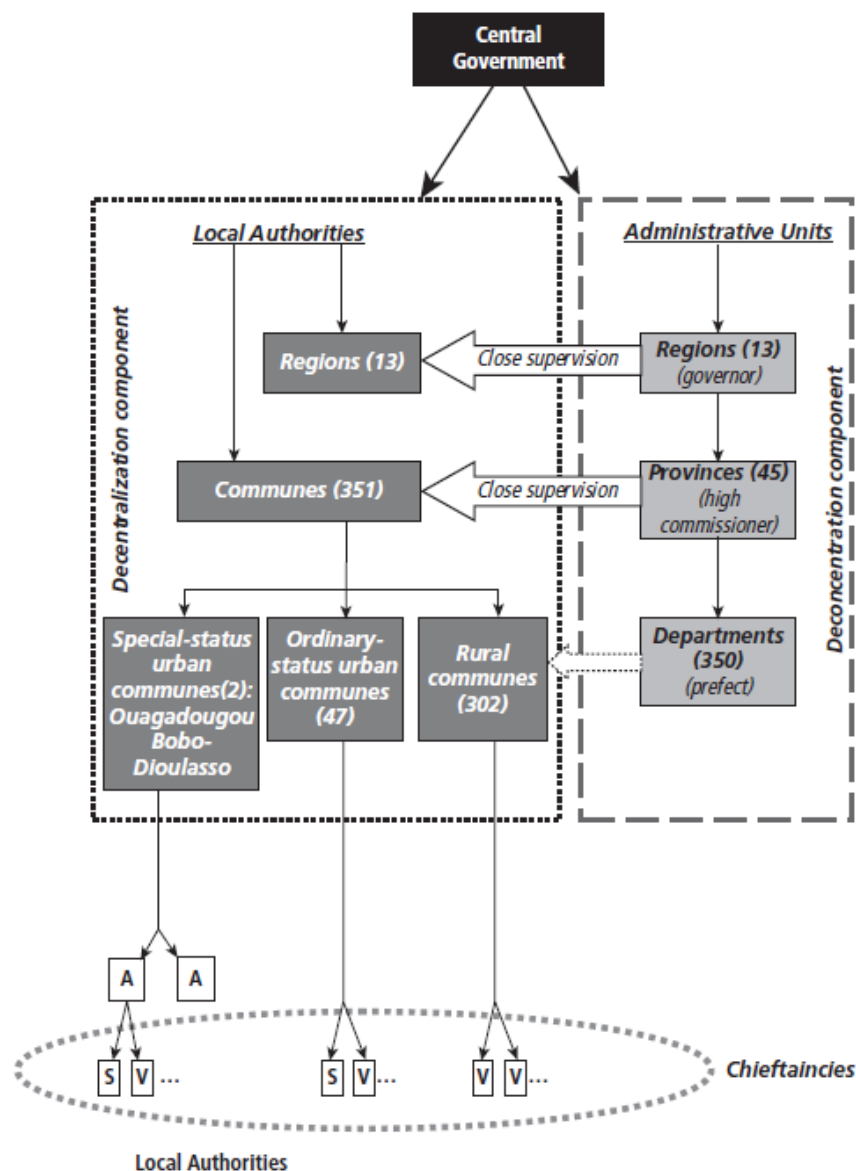
It should be noted also that in 1996, a reform proposal suggested to create non-elected local institutions (*Collectivités Locales de Développement*) that would effectively replicate the CVGT system one scale up but this was rejected by the national think tank focused on decentralisation reforms (*Commission Nationale de Décentralisation*)

⁴⁹ The range of competences that municipal councils are able to exercise is elaborated on in the latter part of this Chapter.

⁵⁰ There are 8228 villages in Burkina.

⁵¹ Décret no. 2007- 032/PRES/PM/MATD ‘portant organisation, composition et fonctionnement des Conseils Villageois de Développement (CVD)’, arts. 9-13.

(Jacob 1998, 12). This further goes to show the significance of separating the ‘democratic’ and the ‘bureaucratic’ political fields, and specifically, the significance of electoral politics is distinguishing them.



Sources: Data compiled by the authors based on legislation in force in 2009.
Note: A = arrondissement; S = sector; V = village.

Figure 2. The state-society interface under decentralisation (source: Dafflon 2012, 9)

Three overlaying fields

At the same time, the creation of the ‘democratic field’ does not mean that either the ‘bureaucratic’ and/or the ‘customary fields’ disappear at the interface of state and

society with the creation of municipal councils. On the contrary both are maintained, and indeed overlap under decentralisation.

The ‘bureaucratic field’ overlaps with the ‘democratic’ one in the sense that the *département* and the commune are discrete administrative bodies, but they both rule over the same spatial area. In most cases the boundaries of a *département* matches that of a commune. As such the municipal council and the *préfet* both rule over the same area. However these fields do not exactly compete, at least not technically, since the municipal council and the *préfet* have different mandates.

The statutory discreteness of the ‘democratic field’ vis-à-vis the ‘bureaucratic’ one should not be emphasised too far however. Indeed in addition to elected councillors, the municipal council also includes a Secretary General (SG) who is a civil servant appointed by the MATDS to technically support the council. Unlike all other members of the municipal council, the SG is not elected and is not accountable to electors, but rather to the *préfet*. The maintenance of the *préfet* and the allocation of a SG to each municipal council is justified on the grounds of enhancing the technical capacities of the municipal council, but these measures are also often interpreted as a way for bureaucratic power to ‘keep an eye’ on the ‘democratic field’. While the municipal council is not accountable to these civil servants, the latter do exercise some level of oversight of municipal decisions (CGCT arts. 54-68), and by virtue of their role as ‘*autorités de tutelle*’. In this sense, the extent to which these fields are discrete depends on the extent to which they are autonomous from one another, and this autonomy is enacted in the every day through relations of recognition as will be illustrated in the case of Séguénéga.

There are also overlaps between the ‘democratic’ and the ‘customary fields’. This overlap is spatial to a certain extent, though not as neatly as that between the ‘bureaucratic’ and the ‘democratic’ political fields. As shown above, the PNGT and the revised land reform under the Fourth Republic have implicitly reinstated the authority of customary chiefs, albeit *de facto*. As also shown, the authority of customary chiefs is strongly related to the management of land and natural resources and it is spatially linked to village jurisdictions, as a hangover from the colonial rule

as described above. In the sense that several villages are included in a single commune, the municipal council rules in parallel with enduring customary authorities, or ‘neo-customary institutions’ (Beucher 2010, 34), which have authority over the multitude of villages included in a single commune.⁵² Under decentralisation, customary chiefs are not recognised any more legally as a formal part of administration as they were under the CNR rule, but here again, they are not forbidden to engage with the process of local administration. For example the CVD members are nominated in a similar way as the CVGT were, so that all lineages are represented within CVD committees—here again neo-customary chiefs are able to take part in the appointment of CVD representatives.⁵³ In addition, neo-customary chiefs are not forbidden to take part in the ‘democratic field’. Indeed, as pointed out by Ouédraogo (2006), customary chiefs or members of their family lineages are oftentimes the most ‘natural’ candidates as municipal councillors and mayors by virtue of their ‘local legitimacy’. In this sense the ‘customary’ and ‘democratic’ political fields overlap. This is true in Burkina Faso as well as elsewhere in the Sahel (Buur and Kyed 2007). While it is distinct from the ‘democratic field’ in a statutory sense, in practice the ‘customary field’ endures and these fields intersect in important ways.

The power to raise taxes: the significance of autonomy

This Chapter so far has traced the genealogy of local administration in Burkina. This account shows the historical singularity of municipal councils as a form of local administration in Burkina. At the same time, seeing decentralisation as a political

⁵² I use the term ‘neo-customary’ here to echo with work done recently on the re-emergence of traditional authorities in the context of democratization in Africa. This term is useful because it allows to keep in sight the historical constructedness of customary chiefs, rather than a natural hangover of pre-colonial times: firstly, in the light of the discussion in this Chapter, the term ‘customary’ echoes the fact that customary chiefs were clearly first a colonial invention, secondly the prefix ‘neo’ emphasizes their renewed significance under the era of liberal democracy instituted in the Fourth Republic. At the same time, I do not keep using this term because the renewed significance of traditional chiefs is only touched upon lightly in this thesis. Rather, what I wish to emphasise is that chiefs are one among other equally important institutions of power that emerge within a context of democratization (as we will see in Chapter Six).

⁵³ Once the reform of ‘*communalisation intégrale*’ was in place, the CVGT were discontinued and all their assets and responsibilities taken on by the CVD were transferred to the CVD as soon as the latter are created (Decree no. 032-2007 portant organisation et fonctionnement des CVDs). However the PNGT and the ‘*communalisation intégrale*’ have advanced in parallel they have not necessarily been discrete territorial processes. For example the PNGT continues to be applied today and the latest phase launched in early 2014 specifically focuses on supporting rural communal initiatives towards sustainable natural resource use and local development.

field helps to show that this field is not entirely independent from previous forms of administration in that customary authorities continue to play a role in municipal administration and local civil servants also rule over the same area as the politicians from the municipal council. What this means is that asserting public authority for municipal councils is a challenge and has to be fought by asserting political autonomy vis-à-vis the ‘customary’ and ‘bureaucratic’ political fields.

The autonomy of municipal councils is not only founded on electoral politics, but also on the principle of subsidiarity. In accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, local governments are the most appropriate level of administration, but in order to be legitimate, they must have a mandate and they must have discretionary powers (Mathieu and Yilmaz 2010, Ribot and Oyono 2005, Hillhorst and Baltissen 2011). In Burkina, the mandate of municipal councils was framed in 2004 with the adoption of the *Code Général des Collectivités Territoriales* (CGCT 2004). The Code delineates 11 domains that ought to progressively become the responsibility of municipal councils.⁵⁴ In this sense, the legitimacy of municipal councils resides in their ability to exercise discretionary powers within these domains, and this fundamentally distinguishes municipal councils from earlier forms of administration in Burkina. However their ability to exercise powers over these domains is predicated upon their fiscal sovereignty: if they are unable to raise taxes, municipal councils are unlikely to be accountable to their electors. This means that the exercise of public authority under conditions of decentralisation is strongly connected to the struggle of municipal councils to become financially autonomous.

In the last section of this Chapter I take the question of autonomy to the commune of Séguénéga. I present the area of study through an account of the extent of financial autonomy enjoyed by the municipality of Séguénéga, focusing particularly on the significance of gold and woodfuel resources in the struggle for autonomy of the municipal council in Séguénéga.

⁵⁴ 1. Land management, 2. Territorial development and urban planning, 3. Environment and natural resource management, 4. Economic development and planning, 5. Health and hygiene, 6. Education, employment, vocational training and literacy, 7. Culture, sports, recreation and youth, 8. Civil defense, assistance and emergency relief, 9. Funeral services and cemeteries, 10. Water and electricity, 11. Markets, fairs and slaughterhouses (Loi no. 055-2004 portant Code Général des Collectivités Territoriales au Burkina Faso)

Gold and woodfuel in Séguénéga: the significance of autonomy

As pointed out in the thesis Introduction, in Séguénéga most people engage in subsistence agriculture to make a living, but raising revenues from farm work is not realistic, and therefore the opportunities for the municipal government in Séguénéga to become financially autonomous are few. However agriculture is not the only means of making a living in Séguénéga. Below I situate gold and woodfuel production as activities that are also engaged to make a living and that present an opportunity for the municipal council to become autonomous.

The gold-woodfuel nexus in Séguénéga

Agroecological conditions have become increasingly unfavourable for farming throughout Burkina but in North Burkina in particular. The majority of inhabitants rely on family-based agriculture that takes place in the rainy season when people mostly cultivate millet, sorghum, corn, black eyed-bean, peanut and sesame mostly for subsistence but also sometimes for cash too. While a majority of residents farm for a living, they also engage on and off-farm activities to complement farm work. These activities include husbandry of small and big ruminants, as well as poultry, and vegetable gardening in the dry season that includes the cultivation of tomatoes, cabbage, and onions in areas that are close to water sources.⁵⁵ In addition to these two cash-generating activities in the area, small-scale gold digging and the commercialisation of woodfuel also generate cash, and these latter activities present realistic opportunities for the local government to raise taxes in order to become financially autonomous.

Gold resources are not equally distributed in the municipality and the most prolific gold digging shafts are found in the villages of Bakou, Guibou, Tiba and Gambo that are situated along the main north-south road axis. Since the mid-2000s gold prices have risen sharply and small-scale gold production accelerated in these places. Gold diggers include residents from these villages, but also from other villages within and beyond the municipality. For the gold diggers who come from places where there is

⁵⁵ The area is situated at the source of the White Volta river that runs all the way through Burkina and down to Ghana.

no gold shaft, people also engage in small-scale gold digging, but ‘finding work’ is not always straightforward in these sites and often depends on people’s acquaintances. In these places therefore residents engage in some of the activities listed above including woodcutting. This activity is mostly undertaken in the North of the commune where tree resources are relatively abundant and where there are few gold digging opportunities (Figure 3).

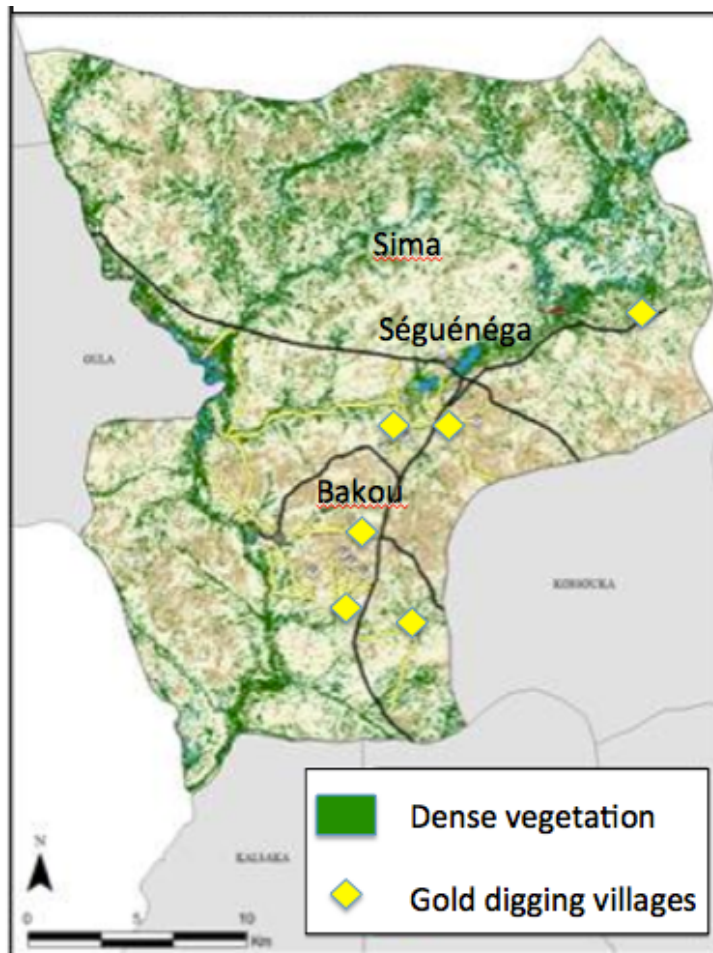


Figure 3. Distribution of forest resources and mining sites in Séguénéga (Source: adapted from Palacios Lopez (2013))

The comparative significance of gold and woodfuel in local livelihoods is also uneven in Séguénéga. Table 2 below presents a snapshot of the way some inhabitants in Séguénéga perceive the relative importance of the various activities they engage for a living. It results from a group interview conducted in Sima when participants were asked to list the activities that were most important to make a living in the municipality of Séguénéga (rows), and to rank these on a scale of 1 to 10, the latter

being the strongest, for four different criteria: the importance these have for food, for cash, the amount of work they require and the number of people engaged in these activities.⁵⁶

	Subsistence	Cash	Amount of Work	Number of people involved
Small-scale gold digging	n/a	9	9	7
Husbandry	7	8	9	8
Vegetable gardening	5	7	6	5
Woodcutting	n/a	4	6	5
Agriculture	8	4	10	10
Masonry	n/a	3	3	2
Artisan crafts	n/a	3	5	4 (mostly elders)
Sales from cooking	n/a	2	7	4 (only women)

Table 2. A representation of livelihoods as seen from the village of Sima

The table above shows on the one hand that small-scale gold digging is the activity that occupies more residents in Séguénéga and brings in more revenues than the production of woodfuel does. On the other hand these are both activities that occupy a certain number of people in the municipality of Séguénéga. While it is difficult to quantify the significance of these activities in local livelihoods, the table above offers a good approximation of their relative importance in Séguénéga. In view of the discussion above, what is significant here is that gold and woodfuel both present taxation opportunities for the municipal council to be financially autonomous. Below I show however that while residents in Séguénéga are able to afford local taxes, and

⁵⁶ This table resulted from one focus group conducted in Sima, a village close to Séguénéga, (CVD representatives, Sima, group interview on 16.11.2011). It is therefore not representative for the entire area - for example vegetable gardening is marked as occupying a majority of women, whereas in other villages where water is better available, vegetable gardening is controlled by men. However this gives a sense of the various activities undertaken in the area, their relative importance in the local economy and local livelihoods.

while taxation over these activities can enhance the exercise of public authority within the ‘democratic field’, most of the revenues generated in Séguénéga do not come from the taxation of gold and woodfuel resources.

Financial autonomy in Séguénéga

Despite the fact that the majority of inhabitants are poor in Séguénéga, it is one of the wealthiest communes in one of the poorest regions of Burkina Faso. It is situated in the North region that has the second highest poverty index of the 13 regions in Burkina (Dafflon, Madiès, and Ky 2013, 92). The North Region counts 31 communes and according to official national sources for 2009 Séguénéga is the third wealthiest municipality in the region. In 2009 the commune of Séguénéga had a total resources of CFA 294,928,926 (GBP 351,500) within which only 15.5% are accounted for by central transfers.⁵⁷ The fact that the municipality is able to raise 85% of its own resources tells us that inhabitants are relatively able to pay local taxes and inversely municipal authorities are able to levy them. In this sense, Séguénéga, while a rural commune, is distinctly on the wealthy end of its category.

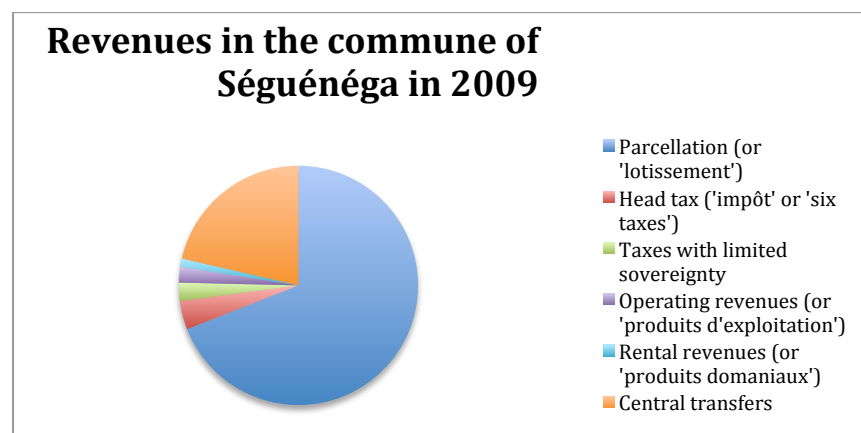


Figure 4. Revenues in the commune of Séguénéga in 2009

⁵⁷ This budget analysis is based on official data publicly available from the General Budget Direction (<http://www.dgb.gov.bf>). It should be kept in mind that the data presented here are valid for 2009 only, and municipalities were only put in place with the elections in 2006, so they reflect the financial situation of municipalities, and that of Séguénéga in particular, at the second effective year of their mandate. This means that the situation is likely to change rapidly in the future but according to the councillor in charge of municipal accounting the municipal budget did not change radically between 2011 and 2012 when fieldwork was undertaken and therefore provide an adequate dataset to contextualise the work. In addition no decrees that were taken during these years directly affected the fiscal structure framing rights and responsibilities of municipalities in the forestry and mining sector. During the time of fieldwork an additional central transfer of CFA 18 million was effectuated. I know this from an informal chat with the general secretary and this was later confirmed by the councilor in charge of accounting (interviews on 03.11.2011).

The figure above summarises revenue streams for the municipality in 2009. The biggest contribution to the resources raised locally comes from taxation on the parcellation of urban and peri-urban land, a national-level operation referred to as '*lotissement*'.⁵⁸ The operation consists in the parcelling and titling of land plots, which are carried out in exchange of an administrative fee paid by the land claimant to the benefit of the municipal budget, and the *lotissement* revenues represented here correspond to the sum of these aggregated fees. The extent of these revenues demonstrates that while people are poor in Séguénéga they are also able to contribute local taxes. At the same time, the taxes imposed on the *lotissement* operation are not ordinary ones, and they can only be sustained for a limited period: once the most important amount of land parcels have been created and registered, the revenue flow generated from the *lotissement* fee will stop (Dafflon, Madiès, and Ky 2013: 64). In this sense, while the *lotissement* is a tremendous opportunity for the 'democratic field' to assert its autonomy, it is not sustainable on the long run.

Other revenues coming from local taxation in Séguénéga ensure a more constant flow of revenue and as such offer a better opportunity for local councils to assert public authority within the electoral field. These however only represent around 9% of revenues raised by the municipality, and municipal authorities have limited sovereignty over their imposition. There are two types of revenues within this share and these two types are distinguished by the amount of fiscal sovereignty that the municipality affords on their collection. The first type of revenue raised by the municipality pertains to mandatory taxes, represented in the graph as 'head taxes' and 'taxes with sovereignty'. The first category of taxes includes 'six taxes', which are better characterised as '*impôt*' because they are fixated by central legislation.⁵⁹ While they contribute to the municipal budget (4%), the municipal council has no sovereignty over this revenue; the municipal council cannot cancel or modify them.

⁵⁸ I was told that an additional CFA 200 millions were raised through the parcellation in 2011 (Interview with the Secretary General, interview on 03.11.2011). I did not follow the issue in detail at the time of fieldwork and because it was not directly related to my object of study on forest and gold resources. However I sufficiently followed the issue locally, through reading newspapers and conversations in Ouagadougou to realise that it was a politically sensitive issue (see the analysis of Hilgers (2008; 2013) on the issue). Accusations of embezzlements have been so widespread that the operation was nationally suspended for a while in April 2011.

⁵⁹ These cover businesses, residency, mortmain, forearms, land taxes and the contribution to the informal sector tax (Dafflon Madiès, and Ky 2013, 81-83).

The second category, the ‘taxes with limited sovereignty’ contribute a good share of the more constant flow of taxation in Séguénéga (around 2% of the municipal budget). They mostly include entertainment, gaming, advertising, animal carts and a tax on ‘communal development’, and municipal councillors can decide on the tariff to impose.⁶⁰ However, the fact that the local council cannot cancel these taxes means that it has limited fiscal sovereignty over them, which means that they grant little authority to the local council: they are effectively an instrument to the benefit of the central administration rather than an element of local councils’ subsidiary power that would help them assert authority.

The second type of revenue raised by the municipality only represents 3% of its total revenue. This type of revenue is made up of taxes over which municipal authorities exercises the most fiscal sovereignty and that also insure a constant flow of revenue. These are broadly ‘benefit-related taxes’ and ‘user fees’ that are paid in exchange of a service rendered by the municipality, comprising two categories of taxes: firstly, the ‘operating revenues’ or the so-called ‘*produits d’exploitation*’ (2%), which cover mostly taxes on the production of civil certificates and other administrative services. Secondly, the ‘rental revenues’, or ‘*produits domaniaux*’ (1%), represent the rentals from municipal estates (offices, market place, material). Taxes over the production of gold and woodfuel would fit into this category of taxes if they were not firmly held by the central state.

What emerges from this account is a paradox. On the one hand the ‘democratic field’ has been created under the decentralisation reform but given the overlap with the ‘customary’ and ‘bureaucratic’ political fields, municipal councils need to become financially autonomous in order to be able to exercise authority. At the same time the municipal council in Séguénéga is not able to generate resources from the production of gold and woodfuel resources despite the fact that these resources are an important

⁶⁰ This latter tax on communal development however was not visible on the budget for 2009. This is explained by the fact that the tax was adopted in 2010 and is applied to motor vehicles, except for official ones that have specific matriculation plates (see <http://www.lefaso.net/spip.php?article35254>). In Séguénéga this tax was talked about but I do not have any data on it. It was particularly relevant with regards to the increase of tricycle vehicles that were used as taxis for the transport of people, and to transport sand, either for making cement bricks, or silt residues coming from the process of ore transformation at the mining camps.

basis of livelihoods, and despite the fact that residents in Séguénéga are able to pay local taxes (see resource generated from the *lotissement* operation).

Conclusion

In this Chapter I presented the context in which decentralisation takes place in Burkina. The first part traces the genealogy of local administration in Burkina. Mobilising the concept of field I show that municipal councils are a singular type of local administration in the history of Burkina Faso in that the contemporary decentralisation reform has created a new political field, namely, the democratic field. At the same time, this field has not come to replace but rather overlaps with, or sediments over, earlier forms of local administration. Customary authorities still exist and their significance has indeed been revived since multi-party democracy. The bureaucratic field also endures, though the overlap of communes and *départements*, and specifically over the fact that the municipal council and the *préfet* rule over the same area.

This historical account serves to show that asserting authority is a challenge for municipal councils. I also show that while the bureaucratic, customary and democratic fields overlap spatially, the latter is distinguished by the imperative of autonomy: the legitimacy of municipal councils resides in the imperative to become financially autonomous.

The second part of this Chapter tackles the question of autonomy in relation to local taxation in the commune of Séguénéga. An analysis of the municipal budget in Séguénéga shows that while local residents are able to pay taxes, gold and woodfuel are not being taxed in Séguénéga because the central state retains property over these resources and has not devolved fiscal powers to municipal councils within these sectors. This brings up the paradox of autonomy whereby on the one hand, decentralisation has created a new political field that is predicated upon the ability of municipal councils to become financially autonomous; on the other hand, in Séguénéga gold and woodfuel resources offer the possibility for municipal councils to

become autonomous but they are not granted the fiscal powers that could ensure the viability of the ‘democratic field’.

Over all, this Chapter shows that in Burkina the authority of local governments is fragile and the ability to raise taxes over gold and woodfuel production could serve to enhance the exercise of public authority within the ‘democratic field’. Municipal authorities are therefore a key local player in the exercise of public authority over the production of gold and woodfuel. However, the fact that these resources are not taxed begs the question who has authority locally over the production of gold and woodfuel resources and how do they relate to municipal authorities. In the following Chapter I tackle the first part of this question comparatively, through an examination of the institutional landscapes that emerges from the regulatory regimes exercised over these resources in Burkina.

Chapter 5. Resource concessions: Uneven institutional power and autonomy

In this Chapter I continue the discussion of autonomy by exploring more explicitly what I call institutional power. Institutional power refers to the variety of government and non-government sanctioned institutions that are able to enforce collectively binding decisions over the production of gold and woodfuel resources. I get access to institutional power by exploring the institutional effects of state-sanctioned regulatory frameworks over these resources. I show that these frameworks give rise to an uneven form of institutional power where a large proportion of gold and woodfuel resources are governed by either absent or partial government-sanctioned institutions of power.

I use the story of gold mining and woodfuel to illustrate the ways in which government-sanctioned frameworks shape the relation between competing forms of institutional power over resources. What emerges out the comparative analysis is another aspect of the significance of autonomy within the resource-authority nexus. There are many differences in the way gold and woodfuel resources are regulated, particularly the fact that central government retains some level of authority on the ground in the forestry sector while it does not in the mining sector. However the two cases resonate in important ways, particularly through the creation of resource concessions. What is significant about this resonance is that in both cases, resource production takes place outside these concessions—as is the case in Séguénéga—and in these places producers enjoys greater autonomy vis-à-vis government sanction than those within the concessions. In this sense, as ‘projects of rule’ aiming to make production legible are partially rolled out, regulatory frameworks give rise to uneven forms of institutional power over national space, which is defined by autonomy.

Similar uneven forms of institutional power have often been characterised by a distinction between formal/informal or legal/illegal production. This characterisation however does not capture well the relation that producers entertain with central government because illegal practices also occur within resource concessions. What better characterises that relation is autonomy. In other words, the form of institutional power that emerges and endures through regulatory frameworks is not so much one of a kind (formal/informal) but one of a degree, of more or less autonomy. This difference of degree of autonomy is crucial because it shapes the relation that

producers entertain with government in general, and local government in particular. When the degree of autonomy enjoyed by resource producers meets with the imperative of autonomy that characterises local administration under decentralisation, a particular kind of politics emerges. This politics is characterised by the struggle over autonomy that is played out in the field of decentralisation, and thereby grants the state its relevance. This Chapter lays a foundation for the politics of autonomy that emerges very clearly in Séguénéga (Chapters Seven and Eight). As resource producers and local government meet, it is precisely their struggle over autonomy that shapes the enduring relevance of the state under conditions of so-called ‘weak state’.

Resource concessions

The regulation of gold mining started in the 1980s under the CNR rule with the creation of a parastatal institution, the *Comptoir Burkinabè des Métaux Précieux* (CBMP), which held a monopoly over the commercialisation of gold resources and exercised public authority on the ground. Liberalisation reforms in this sector were adopted in Burkina after they were advocated by the IMF and the World Bank in the 1990s, and changed quite radically the landscape of institutional power over gold resources in Burkina. Firstly production was privatised such that the CBMP became redundant and it had to be closed down as an oversight agency. This means that central government was no longer present on the ground to organise small-scale production. Secondly, the promotion of private investment under liberal reforms attracted a whole range of investors, particularly foreign ones in the industrial sub-sector, and domestic ones in the artisanal sub-sector. In the latter, private investors were able to acquire artisanal mining licenses (AAM) and to create artisanal mining concessions where they replaced the regulatory role of the CBMP on the ground. However, small-scale gold production was not limited to AAM concessions, and in places where there are no such concessions, producers enjoyed greater autonomy over regulation. It is in this sense that I argue autonomy characterises the relation between competing forms of institutional power that emerges through the regulation of gold resources.

In the case of woodfuel, recent liberal reforms were also pivotal but these were layered upon previous institutional arrangements created in 1935 under colonial rule. At that time, woodfuel resources were not regulated, but property over forests was centralised and the management of forest resources was overseen by colonial forest administrative services on the ground. After independence these arrangements were maintained and transformed in the 1980s when global concerns over desertification and advocacies of 'participatory development' converged to bring attention to the need to regulate woodfuel production. Under the CNR rule, woodfuel was centralised through a regime of taxes and permits, and regulation was enforced by ground level forest administration that had endured from colonial rule. Much like what CBMP agents did in the case of small-scale gold production, forest agents oversee the enforcement of centralised legislation over woodfuel. At the same time, a donor-funded project introduced a community forestry model that made space for the creation of community-based woodfuel concessions. These concessions have multiplied over the last two decades. It is significant that in both cases they are in fact headed by another institution of power, namely forest agents, that those advocated, namely woodcutter cooperatives. In addition, like in the case of artisanal mining, production within woodfuel concessions is more tightly regulated than outside them. As such here again, autonomy is what characterises the relation between competing institutional forms of power that have been shaped by state-sanction over resource regulation. The ways that woodfuel concessions differ from artisanal mining concessions are developed below.

The informalisation of gold regulation

'Be careful now, you must make the difference between orpaillage and artisanal mines. They're not the same thing at all. With the artisanal mines there is an organisation, it is regulated, there is a permit and a spokesman, whereas orpaillage is like the mafia, it is impossible to know who is responsible, there are drugs and prostitution, it shouldn't be allowed, but the state is too poor'

National community relations officer, Orezone, Séguénéga, interview on 06.12.2011

This description was painted to me early on in my fieldwork, as I met the national and international bosses from the Canadian company that has held a mining exploration license in Séguénéga since 2001. This comment from the company's community relations officer followed my question about whether the transnational mining company he worked for had had issues dealing with local gold diggers over their permit in Séguénéga, something I knew of course having spent the last three months with them. This reaction is typical of the general representation in Burkina of small-scale mining as a morally and socially degrading and depraving activity. What is interesting in this comment is the distinction made between *orpaillage*, and artisanal mining as two distinct regulatory arrangements, the latter being 'regulated' and the former not.

In Séguénéga gold diggers operate without a license, and according to the informant quoted above, they fall effectively under the *orpaillage*, or unregulated, activity. However what I observed in the mines of Bakou, Gambo and Tiba are quite sophisticated regulatory frameworks, albeit non state-sanctioned ones. In this section I examine the construction of this dual form of regulation characterised by arrangements that run along the lines of more or less government sanction that is characterised by resource concessions. I analyse regulatory frameworks and show that what distinguishes these arrangements is not so much their form, or formalism, but the different degree of autonomy that resource producers enjoy under artisanal mining and *orpaillage* arrangements respectively.

The CBMP: the birth of state-sanctioned gold regulation

In Burkina, the mining sector started to be regulated in 1986, much later than neighbouring states. This can be explained by the fact that gold only became an important part of the national economy in the late 1980s, while Ghana and Mali for example have a longer tradition of gold mining (Luning 2006, Campbell 2008).

The first nation-wide regulation happened under the brief but intense CNR rule led by Thomas Sankara between 1983 and 1987. In 1986 the CNR regime created a parastatal society (*Société d'État*) the *Comptoir Burkinabè des Métaux Précieux* (CBMP). The CBMP held a monopoly over the production, processing, marketing and export of gold in Burkina. It fixed the buying price of gold nationally, which was indexed onto the London market price.

There are two historical contingencies that help understand the emergence of this type of statutory regulation. Firstly, the mid-1980s was a time of prolonged droughts across the Sahel that caused extensive crop failure and as a way to compensate for lost agricultural crops, many farmers turned to small-scale gold mining. Secondly, the global value of gold rose sharply in the 1980s, which further encouraged farmers to undertake small-scale mining. At that time, industrial mining was not well developed in Burkina. It counted only two minor industrial mines at Essakane and Poura, which were partly owned by French investors (Kambou 2006).⁶¹ As such the CBMP was essentially created to regulate the expanding small-scale sector. Its first Director recalls that *'at that time the state was not involved at all. The state did not even know what people got from this activity; if they did get something, the state on the other hand did not gain anything from it, yet when there were accidents in small-scale mining, the state was criticised for not doing anything, so we had to take this sector in hand'* (First CBMP Director (1986-1989), Ouagadougou, interview on 05.12.2012). As such, before 1986, there was no coherent national mining legislation and the CBMP was created to start regulating the expansion of small-scale mining in Burkina.

⁶¹ The rise in gold prices did not revive much the two minor industrial extractive sites, which were opened during the colonial period. This is because of a conflict of interest that emerged between the newly created state-owned agencies, SOREMIB and CEMOB, and the two French owned companies (Kambou 2006).

The CBMP had a threefold mandate: 1) to buy gold from small-scale miners, as a way to 'integrate them within an official commercial circuit'; 2) to bring technical expertise to make small-scale extraction safe; 3) to improve the balance of trade (Gueye 2001). In order to control small-scale gold production and commercialisation, the CBMP trained and employed a number of ground-level technical agents who were posted in the localities where small-scale mining was taking place. CBMP agents had two main duties. The first was to organise working arrangements at small-scale mining sites, and the second was to control the commercialisation of gold at these sites. Below I examine the extent to which this 'project of rule' was implemented, and analyse the forms of institutional power that arose over the production of gold as this project landed on the ground.

The first role of CBMP technicians was to supervise the organisation of small-scale extraction. They were trained to implement safety measures on the sites they supervised, such as distance between shafts and between sites and habitations (ex-CBMP local gold buyer, Séguénéga, interview on 29.04.2012).⁶² Part of the revenue raised by the CBMP was directly reinvested in the organisation and improvement of mining sites, infrastructures and equipment (Werthmann 2006). The 2004 Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper for Burkina Faso states that between 1991 and 2001, CFA 500 million (GBP 596,000) were re-invested into small-scale mining arrangements locally (GoB 2004, 61).

Secondly, CBMP agents controlled commercialisation. The CBMP was the only state-sanctioned agency where gold diggers could legally sell the gold they extracted. CBMP agents posted in rural areas distributed 'gold purchasing agreement' cards for CFA 250,000 (GBP 298), which were signed by the Ministry of Mines. These cards provided their holders the right to purchase the gold extracted locally by gold diggers, which they had to then sell again to the CBMP agent. In addition to these Agreements, small-scale mining sites also counted a number of local buyers who were authorised to buy gold from the diggers after they were handed a 'local purchase card' by the CBMP agent, and which cost CFA 1,000 (GBP 1.20) (Gueye 2001, 39). CBMP technicians oversaw the organisation of gold commercialisation, and the local

⁶² Local CBMP agents were also in charge of mediating conflicts that arose in relation to gold and that small-scale miners were not able to resolve themselves (Werthmann 2003).

cardholders they hired aimed to provide a highly controlled environment to prevent the development of fraud. In order to prevent fraud, CBMP technicians were able to mobilise local police agents to pursue gold smugglers (Grätz 2004, 146). This regulatory framework allowed government to be a significant institution of power over the extraction of gold resources.

At the same time, this does not mean that CBMP agents were able to implement government sanction in practice. It is common knowledge for example that some diggers kept the gold they dug out for themselves. In Séguénéga, some of the ex-CBMP buyers, who were usually men from the local area, remember smuggling some of the gold they bought from the diggers, which they kept and sold to the black market because the price offered was more advantageous than that practiced by the CBMP (ex-CBMP buyer, Séguénéga, interview on 01.05.2012). As has been noted by an ex-CBMP agent: *'Small-scale miners could not make good business with gold at the time of the CBMP because the prices fixed by the government were low; you had to sell with the government, and you'd have to be careful if you got caught!'* (ex-CBMP agent in Séguénéga, currently employed at the Ministry of Mining, Ouagadougou, interview on 30.03.2012). In addition, CBMP agents themselves sometimes stole some of the gold they were mandated to buy. As one of the miners in Séguénéga recalls, *'people who were posted in the provinces for the CBMP started 'eating the money''* (gold digger/ex-CBMP buyer, Séguénéga, interview on 29.04.2012). The enforcement capacity of the CBMP was therefore not optimum, and far from effectively rolling out a 'project of rule' the creation the CBMP gave rise to an uneven institutional form characterised by so-called 'legal and illegal' production.

Private gold counters: the CBMP made redundant

After the revolutionary regime fell in 1987 and after the period of 'Rectification' described in the previous Chapter, SAPs were proposed by the IMF and the World Bank, and signed by the Burkinabè government in 1992. At that time, a new set of mining regulatory frameworks were devised and again re-shaped the landscape of institutional power over gold production. These regulatory frameworks put an end to the CBMP but they did not necessarily put an end to the dual form of 'legal and illegal' production.

One of the very first and most decisive legal acts taken towards the liberalisation of the mining sector was the revocation of the state monopoly by the CBMP on gold trade, by authorising in 1996 the creation of private gold counters (*comptoirs privés*).⁶³ Opening up the commercialisation of gold to private actors ‘*aimed to make the sector more competitive and more efficient in the face of the fraud that took place under the CBMP*’ (Director, ORCADE, Ouagadougou, interview on 12.04.2012).

The CBMP continued to exist for a while, but the new regulatory frameworks soon made it redundant: the CBMP was privatised in 2001 and it was eventually dismantled in 2006 (GoB 2007, 22).⁶⁴ The reason it became redundant is because the creation of private gold counters meant that the CBMP had to start competing with these commercial actors, which seriously undermined its regulatory capacity. Specifically, it became less able to capture the revenues generated from gold.

Firstly, after the private gold counters were created it became increasingly difficult for the CBMP to control the proliferation of illegal sales points on small-scale sites, or at town markets because the CBMP agent was no longer the only one buying gold from the diggers. Indeed, it was suggested that at the time, the majority of gold production was not channelled through the CBMP and according to Englebert (1996:96, cited in Werthmann 2003) at least 40% was smuggled out of the country. A later study conducted by the French *Bureau de Recherches Géologiques et Minières* in collaboration with the *Bureau des Mines et de la Géologie du Burkina Faso* (BUMIGEB) estimated that 80% of gold was sold through informal channels between 2001 and 2003 (Jacques et al. 2006, 123). As a corollary, as Werthmann (2003) reports, tensions rose between CBMP agents and an emerging class of powerful, and now illegal, small-scale gold miners who started thriving off the informal market.

Secondly the prices that the CBMP offered to gold diggers was set by the government and was generally less advantageous for diggers compared to those practised by private gold counters. As explained by one ex-CBMP agent, ‘*while we were there*

⁶³ Decree no. 96-231/PRES/PM/MEM on 3rd July 1996, and Decree no. 97- 035/MEM/MEF/MCIA on 14th May 1997. These are typical liberalisation reforms aiming to lessen the role of the state. It was justified as a way to promote private investment and employment, which were perceived to be hindered by the CBMP monopoly (GoB 2007).

⁶⁴ Decree no. 015-2001/AN of 4th July 2001.

with our buyers, the private gold counters were *there at the corner too*’ (ex-CBMP agent, small-scale mining direction staff, Ouagadougou, interview on 06.12.2012). Since the private counters had greater liberty to manoeuvre prices, they generally set them higher, and gold diggers preferred selling their gold with them rather than with the CBMP. Progressively, the CBMP became unable to generate revenues and went bankrupt. Interestingly, while the creation of private gold counters aimed to make the sector more competitive and more efficient, it actually resulted in the decreased capacity of the central government to generate revenues from the small-scale sector as a whole (Figure 5).

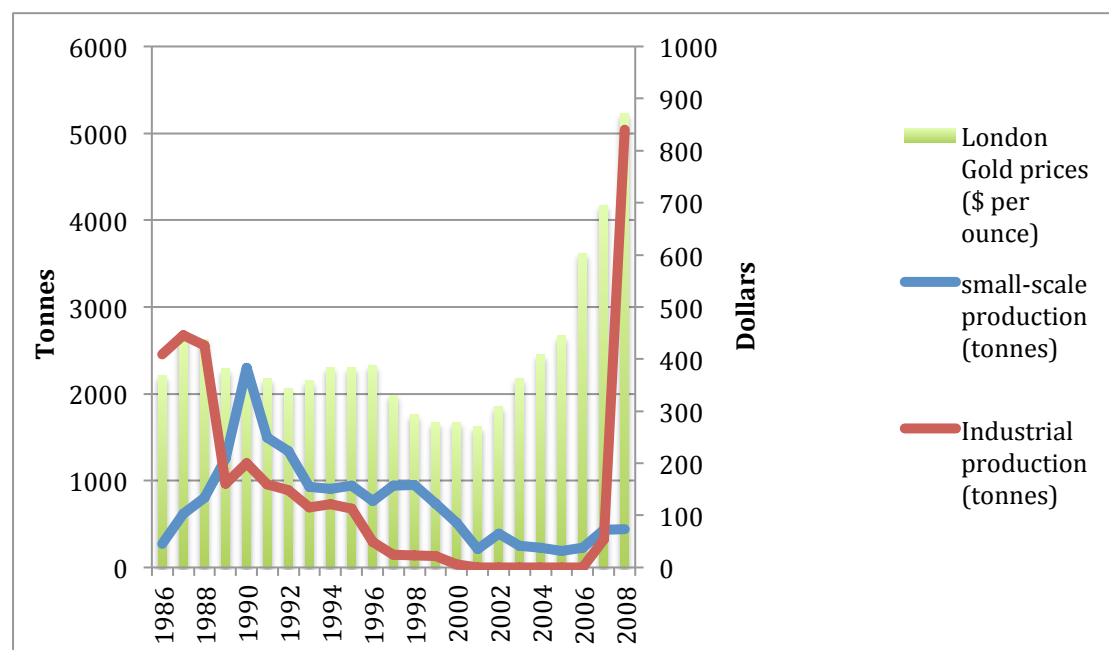


Figure 5. Gold production in Burkina Faso between 1986 and 2008 (Source: compiled from Gueye (2001), WTO (2004), (USGS 2010))

Reasons for the peak and drop in small-scale gold production between 1990 and 1993 need to be further researched. The peak in industrial production is also significant, but it is dwelled upon later on. What is noteworthy here however is the stabilising and then dramatic fall of small-scale gold production between 1998 and 2005. Considering that global gold prices actually rose at the time, there is no reason for this production to have declined and indeed it is generally acknowledged that during that period small-scale extraction continued to expand. What the figure illustrates

therefore is not that small-scale mining declined, but that the government became less and less able to capture the benefits from small-scale extraction.

As such, the regulatory change, albeit the authorisation to create private gold counter, in fact exacerbated fraud and further entrenched the ‘legal/illegal’ institutional form characterising small-scale extraction. As noted earlier however, this characterisation only partially capture the institutional form that regulatory frameworks give rise to because fraud was also undertaken by CBMP agents. In order to understand how this form evolved more specifically, we must examine what replaced the CBMP on the ground.

What has replaced the CBMP? AAM licenses and artisanal mining concessions

At the Ministry of Mining, particularly at the small-scale mining Department, many employees regret the disappearance of the CBMP. One of the four staff interviewed there explained that *‘the CBMP conferred a grasp onto small-scale production. Now the private gold counters are supposed to have replaced the CBMP, but they rarely report the amount of gold they extract, and we do not have the capacity to monitor their activities adequately’* (Small-scale mining department staff, Ministry of Mines, Ouagadougou, interview on 06.12.2012).⁶⁵ In order to understand how private gold counters have come to replace the CBMP, and how the landscape of institutional power transformed over gold production, we must take a look at the mining legislation devised under the liberalisation reforms.

The first Mining Code (1997) redefined the role of the central government as *‘an institution supportive of investment’* (ex-CBMP agent, small-scale mining direction staff, Ouagadougou, interview on 06.12.2012) rather than a direct investor in the sector, as was the case under the CBMP agency. As a facilitator of investment, the main role of the government became the distribution of private mining licenses to potential investors. These licenses are typically differentiated between large-scale industrial sector, including exploration permits and exploitation licenses on the one hand, and the small-scale artisanal sector on the other.

⁶⁵ This was also mentioned in interviews with three Ministry staff, including two staff from the Department of Small-Scale Mining, including its Director, and a legal expert for the whole Ministry.

The promotion of investment in the large-scale industrial sector in Burkina has typically operated through the codification of tax and custom legislation aimed to encourage foreign investment (Pegg 2003). These tax privileges are justified by Ministry of Mining staff as a way to encourage exploration and thereby to regain control by increasing knowledge of underground resources (General Director, Ministry of Mining, Ouagadougou, interview on 23.02.2012). The extent to which this strategy has been successful is contested, but the new tax regime did lead to a boom in the number of mining exploration licenses: a quick glance at the map of currently valid permits at the BUMIGEB office confirmed that it is now difficult to find an area that is not covered by an exploration or an exploitation license. The number of exploration licenses bestowed jumped from 2 in 2001 to around 600 in 2011, and these exploration licenses effectively now cover over 60% of national space (OPM 2011).⁶⁶ In addition, while there had been no industrial mining projects since 1997, a number of seven large-scale open pit gold mines have been built since 2007. These private actors do exercise some authority over small-scale production occasionally; for example in cases where small-scale mining overlaps with industrial mining permits (see e.g. (Luning 2008a, Luning 2012), but not to the extent that the CBMP used to.

In the sub-sector of small-scale mining, two types of licenses became available with the first Mining Code (1997). Firstly the ‘semi-mechanised artisanal mining’ permit and secondly, the ‘artisanal authorisation for mining’ (AAM). The former has not been very popular: between 2001 and 2009 only five such permits were delivered. On the other hand, the AAM license has been more widely acquired: a recent report by the ministry of Mining shows that up until 2006 a total of 205 authorisations were acquired.⁶⁷ The AAM license confers for two years, infinitely renewable, the right for the AAM license holder to buy gold that is extracted in the perimeter covered by his authorisation (maximum 1km sq.). The license is exclusively delivered to Burkinabè

⁶⁶ Permission was not granted to the author to reproduce this map here, but a ‘map of main activities and mineral potential in Burkina Faso’ can be found in Oxford Policy Management (2011: 20, reproduced from Diawara et al. 2010).

⁶⁷ It is difficult to have a clear and up to date estimate number of AAMs currently held, because the central cadastral system is only currently being digitised and because AAM licenses expire after two years they are difficult to keep track of. A ‘summary of valid permits up until 2006’ was obtained with the Ministry of Mining (see appendix: ‘unpublished documents’)

nationals or to companies with a majority of Burkinabè shareholders. The reason why AAMs are usually more sought after than semi-mechanised permits is quite simply because it is less expensive and is also subject to less constraining environmental and labour norms than the 'semi-mechanised artisanal mining' permit.

The AAM is a typical attempt to formalise small-scale mining activities based on assumptions that 'these provisions make it easier for domestic enterprises to follow a "graduation path" leading, eventually, to large-scale mining' (OPM 2011: 46). The fact that AAMs are exclusively reserved to Burkinabè citizens indeed seems like a legislative effort to encourage the national industry in the face of a growing foreign dominated large-scale industry.

These authorisations are also presented by Ministry staff as a way to '*integrate gold diggers in the formal state economy*' (small-scale mining Direction, Ministry of Mining, Ouagadougou, interview on 30.03.2012) as a way for small-scale miners to formalise their activities. On the ground however, these authorisations are never acquired by gold diggers, but by urban-based entrepreneurs. Those applying for these licenses are often those also owning private gold counters, like the companies SOMIKA and Sav'Or.⁶⁸ These private entrepreneurs tend to apply for AAM licenses over areas where many diggers work because it is an indicator of the presence of gold in one place. Interestingly, gold diggers refer to these AAM licensed areas as '*comptoiré*', a vernacular pronunciation of the French word '*comptoir*', or gold counter, thus demonstrating the linkages between these licenses and gold counter owning national elites.

As such, the license regime created under liberalisation reforms gave way to a new landscape of institutional power over the production of gold. Firstly, state-sanctioned institutions are no longer government institutions but private actors, as is the case of private gold counters, and license holders. Secondly, the AAM license in particular created the possibility to establish artisanal mining concessions, which would replace

⁶⁸ Interestingly, AAM holders are also often those who used to work for the CBMP either as state agents, or as local buyers, as is the case for Adama Kindo, the director of the most prominent gold counter SOMIKA.

the role of the CBMP in the small-scale sub-sector. Below I examine the extent to which the legal/illegal dual regime transformed under AAM concessions.

You say CBMP, I say AAM

Those pursuing AAM licenses follow closely the work of diggers. Mégret (2010) for example shows that in South Burkina near the town of Kampti the AAM license holder made a deal with diggers found working in the area and buys the gold extracted by the diggers over the area covered by the license. The diggers are forced to sell what they extract to the AAM holder and at the price set by the latter. Thus the diggers are not exactly employees of the AAM holder, that is, the latter do not bring diggers with him to carry out the work, but rather imposes a price and new work conditions by virtue of the AAM license that he acquired.⁶⁹

This arrangement is not illegal however, as there is no law framing minimum standard on AAM for labour arrangements, but Ministry staff acknowledge that this is far from the formalisation objectives that AAM licenses are meant to achieve (legal expert, Ministry of Mining staff, Ouagadougou, interview on 23.02.2012).⁷⁰ Nevertheless what is interesting here is that there are also striking continuities between the CBMP and AAM arrangements from the point of view of local diggers.

As was the case for the CBMP, the rates offered to diggers by the AAM holder are usually lower than those on the black market, and so AAM holders have to negotiate deals with gold diggers on the ground. One digger explains:

‘They [SOMIKA] force people; sometimes you have to sell your gold for 150,000 with the comptoiré; sometimes you even have to sell at 125,000. Sav’or is a little better, at least they don’t force people there, they just have a local buyer who has to come back with a certain sum after a while but they know that if they force people, it will amount to no good with them.’

Tikaré resident, gold digger, Séguénéga, interview on 11.12.2012

⁶⁹ AAM license holders are allowed to hire private and public security to enforce their claim (Mégret 2010). Dynamics of enforcement within AAM areas are an interesting topic to pursue, but it is beyond the scope of this Chapter that focuses on institutional form. This question is taken up in detail in the next Chapter and in the context of gold production in Séguénéga.

⁷⁰ An AAM holder ought to fill in a *Cahier des Charges* in the application for an AAM but it does not include specifications about the labour brought in the area.

One corollary of this arrangement of course is that, just as was the case at the time of the CBMP, diggers tend to avoid working on sites where an AAM has been acquired, if they can avoid it, because the price of gold outside AAM concessions is higher. Some insights on this state of affairs can be gained from an answer by a small-scale gold digger from Bakou where there is no AAM concession. The digger was asked to explain how he decides which mining sites he goes to work on, and he replied:

Recently I heard that gold was found in Watinooma [a rural town in North-Western Burkina] and so I travelled there the day before yesterday to see whether I could find work. But I found they were quite closed up to strangers there and anyway it would be difficult to make any money; they have a 'comptoiré' there you know. Over there you have to sell 6g at once, and they give you between 60,000 and 80,000CFA for it; here in Bakou there is no 'comptoiré' and you can get 22,500CFA for 1g! [135,000CFA for 6g] So I just came back here to Bakou to work because I can make more money!"

Gold digger, Bakou, interview on 29.07.2011

Indeed the tendency among small-scale miners has been to avoid working on sites held under an AAM, thus fuelling what the informant at the start of this section referred to as *orpaillage*. What is relevant here is that the licensing regime undertaken under liberalisation reforms has attempted to impose a project of rule that has had unintended effects. The point being made here is not that the liberalisation policies failed to reach their objective, though it is obviously the case, but rather that the institutional form that characterises small-scale production is actually quite similar from the point of view of diggers. More specifically, the form of institutional power is characterised by the degree of autonomy that gold diggers operating out of the AAM concessions enjoy compared to those working within.

AAM concessions and autonomous gold diggers

The analysis of statutory regulation over gold production in Burkina shows that while the AAM is advertised nationally and to international donors, as an inclusive institutional framework aimed to formalise small-scale mining, it only partially reaches this objective. This is a typical outcome of liberal mining policies elsewhere (Hilson and Potter 2005, Maconachie and Hilson 2011). Fisher (2007) for example demonstrates how similar reforms in Tanzania have fuelled the social exclusion of small-scale miners, rather than integrating them in the formal economy.

The difference between the CBMP and AAM is clearly that the institutional power that is enforced over small-scale mining is no longer that of the government, but that of private actors. This also means that the gold extracted through small-scale mining now goes to private companies rather than to the government. The central government does receive a tax on the amount that is extracted, but these amounts are notoriously under-reported. As such, the institutional power of the central government over small-scale mining has clearly decreased. However privatisation does not capture well the enduring institutional form that characterises small-scale gold production since liberalisation.

Indeed what is emphasised here is that for gold diggers, these arrangements are actually very similar to those that were enforced at the time of the CBMP. In both cases, the institutional landscape that emerges from regulation is one that is uneven. The distinction between *orpaillage* and artisanal mining at the start of this section is one aspect of unevenness; but what distinguishes this dual regime is not legality: under AAM concessions, gold diggers continue to smuggle gold out of AAM concessions, as was the case also under the CBMP, and AAM license holders tend to underreport their gain, maybe even more so than was the case at the time of the CBMP (cf. Figure 5).

The enduring institutional form that emerges from this analysis is characterised by unevenness and autonomy. Firstly, creating the possibility to establish private gold counters and AAM licenses effectively reproduce an uneven form of institutional power characterised by so called ‘artisanal’ and ‘*orpaillage*’ small-scale mining. Secondly, the former have not so far worked to the advantage of small-scale miners, but rather empowered an urban-based elite, often also those who own *comptoirs privés*. On the other hand, *orpaillage* has evolved un-regulated by the law. In this sense the enduring form of institutional power that emerges through regulation is not characterised by the difference between public and private, since the latter only became prominent in the 1990s; nor is it characterised by a legal and illegal economy, since illegal practices actually take place within ‘legal’ concessions. Rather, the form of institutional power that emerges is one characterised by government and non-government sanctioned institutions of power, which are distinguished by the degree of

autonomy that producers exercise vis-à-vis government sanction. In the next section I show how a similar institutional form of power emerged over woodfuel in Burkina.

Community-based forestry and autonomous woodcutters

The impacts of the liberalisation turn on the forestry sector are not as clear-cut as it was in the mining sector. To start with, unlike the mining sector, the regulation of woodfuel production has not led to the dismantlement of the state agent controlling and distributing permits.⁷¹ On the other hand, some changes in institutional power have occurred.

The SAPs negotiated with the Burkinabè government with the IMF and the World Bank between 1989 and 1992 covered agriculture, husbandry and forestry, but they mainly targeted the agriculture sector, such as privatisation of rice, sugar and cotton companies that had a monopoly of seed/plant/fertiliser distribution, processing and marketisation (Harsch 1998, Zagrè 1994). Regulatory changes in the forestry sector were more directly influenced by global concerns over desertification, sustainable exploitation of timber and ‘rationalising’ woodfuel extraction (MEA 1999). One of the key regulatory changes has been the adoption of community-based woodfuel concessions.⁷²

Like the AAM licenses, community-based woodfuel concessions also divide resource producers between more and less regulated subsectors, as for artisanal mining and *orpaillage*. What is interesting however in the analysis of woodfuel regulation is that the form of institutional power produced is also uneven and characterised by autonomy: woodfuel is not only produced within community-based concessions, but

⁷¹ In fact, while a growing body of private forest agents has emerged since 2002, young graduates from new private forestry school struggle to become employed by the Burkinabè government. The latter offered to set up special exams for them to be able to integrate forest civil service (*service des eaux et forêts*). However these exams were suspended on grounds of lack of funds. In 2012 jobless graduates from this private university training protested against the government false promise, and obtained the equivalent of £100,000 to be spent for the organisation of these exams. Far from being replaced by private entrepreneurs, parastatal services continue to represent a better guarantee for job security than the private sector (see http://www.alerte-info.net/alerte_details.php?f=116)

⁷² This may also be considered as a form of privatisation, and the difference with the mining sector may be understood through the fact that woodfuel makes a smaller contribution to the national economy than gold does.

also outside these concessions. There, woodcutters enjoy more autonomy from government sanction over production. In order to understand this enduring form of relation towards government institutional power, we must start our analysis with the creation of state regulation of forest resources that begun at the colonial period.

Colonial forests: The construction of state-sanctioned property and authority over woodfuel

State regulation over forests in Burkina today bears strong continuity with the regulation created during the colonial regime, when Burkina Faso was under French rule between 1897 and 1960, as part of a colonial territory that was then called the *Afrique Occidentale Française* (AOF). The French colonial regime introduced two particularly 'sticky' institutional measures over the AOF: the first one is the property regime imposed over what became accepted as 'forests' and the second is the everyday authority over the management of these forests in the French tradition of the *garde forestier*, a parastatal authority associated with this centralised property regime.⁷³

These were particularly sticky because they still form the basis of government-sanctioned regulation over forest resources today in Burkina and to some extent also in the rest of francophone West African countries (e.g. see (Ribot 1995, Kassibo 2006)). In order for wood to become regulated, forests had first to be invented, a challenging endeavour in the Sahel where forest resources are scarce. These two institutional initiatives are foundational to the invention of forests. Indeed, while they have lost their original colonial significance, they have been maintained and built upon after Independence in 1960.

Forests and railroad: Colonial administration over forests in Upper Volta

Regulatory measures regarding the extraction of timber products were adopted in the early 1900's in the AOF (Bouda 2009, 11), but these regulations did not reach out to

⁷³ In mooré, there is no such word that refers to forests, despite the fact that some areas are clearly more wooded than others. I have not studied closely the different words used to refer to different types of vegetation, but the word used in mooré is *weoogo*, which translates as 'the bush' that refers more adequately to 'nature' or 'outside home'. This goes beyond semantics however. Research informants tended to use the French word '*forêt*' when referring to an administrative territory, while they use the word *weoogo* to refer to resources.

the territory known today as Burkina Faso because wood resources were not particularly valuable there.⁷⁴ In the early colonial period, forestry work was mainly connected with agriculture and concerned with experimenting with tree-crop species and the potential of large-scale plantation. In North Burkina ecological conditions were not conducive to creating such plantations and most colonial forest services were concentrated in the South of the country. Before the first regulatory text was adopted, a research and training antenna was created in 1904 in Banfora, in the South West, to experiment on the production of rubber trees, palms, as well as more common fruit trees and several hectares are planted around the town (Tourte 2005). In 1908, the first Forest Code was formulated for the AOF territory, but it had little impact at the time (Tourte 2005). So while timber resources were being regulated in some parts of the AOF as early as 1904, in most of what is known today as Burkina, forest resources were gathered quite freely without interference from colonial administrators; the only taxes perceived on natural resources were those connected to agricultural yields.⁷⁵

The focus on agriculture was to change in the 1930s when a railway connecting coastal and inland colonies started to be built. It aimed to connect Abidjan and Niamey, respectively situated in contemporary Ivory Coast and Niger. The railway line reached Bobo-Dioulasso in southwest Burkina in 1933, and its construction required important amounts of timber (Beucher 2010, 37, Dagnogo, Ninot, and Chaléard 2012).

At that time, forest tenure was centralised through a decree in 1935 that gave the right to the colonial administration to administer access to forest resources. This decree, often referred to as the first Forest Code (Bouda 2009), initially aimed to put a halt to the perceived encroachment of indigenous agricultural plantations onto French-owned timber concessions in tropical colonies (Verdeaux and Alpha 1999). In order to regain control over space for timber production, the 1935 Forest Code created the possibility to classify certain areas. This classification was justified on the grounds of

⁷⁴ Timber concessions were mostly situated in the coastal colonies (see Verdeaux and Alpha 1999).

⁷⁵ As mentioned in Chapter Two, the latter mostly concentrated on the collection of taxes, which were either connected to agricultural crop or to the number of household members (Marchal 1980). Massa and Madiéga (1995, 263-291) explain that a service of agriculture was created in Upper Volta in 1923.

‘reconstituting forest stocks’ based on a tree felling rotation system. To this effect the Forest Code classified colonial territories according to two distinct categories: on the one hand the *forêts protégées* characterised the entire territory of the AOF, and on the other a small number of areas could be gazetted as *forêts classées*. The latter were created at the discretion of the colonial administrator. In Upper Volta, gazetted forests were created in places that could satisfy the timber requirements for the building of the railway and were mostly situated in the south of the country and along river streams where timber resources were more abundant.

These gazetted areas were brought under a restrictive regime where agriculture, herding and the collection of forest products, including woodfuel, were forbidden (Hagberg 2006). The underlying logic was that these would be scientifically managed by the colonial administration to satisfy timber demands for the railway while being based on the forest conservation orthodoxy of the time that advocated regrowth through ‘minimum disturbance’. The railway reached Ouagadougou in 1954, and it was never prolonged to Niamey. Despite this the gazetted forest regime endures today.⁷⁶ Today in Burkina there are 65 ‘*forêts classées*’, they were created before Independence in 1960, and they continue to be under the same restrictive regime (GoB/CONAGESE 1999, 69-70). Effectively the creation of these gazetted forests marked the start of legal and illegal woodfuel collection.

Forest agents

In order to enforce this gazetted regime, the Governor of AOF signed an *arrêté* that marked the creation of a brigade that specialised in the enforcement of forest law.⁷⁷ A school was created at Dindéresso in 1953 on the same model as the French one in Nancy (*Ecole Nationale des Eaux et Forêts*). Forest agents were trained at this school to be able to enforce, among other things, the restrictive regime in gazetted forests, and this system also endures today. The impressive archival work by Joanny Guillard (2010) on forestry in the French colonies informs us that these forest agents were not particularly active in Upper Volta. For example the *Service des Inspection Générales* only started sending reports to the Metropole in 1948, compared to 1930s in the

⁷⁶ Forest Code (2011, arts. 54 & 55).

⁷⁷ Decree no. 283/CP du 16 août 1948 Haute-Volta créant le cadre local des gardes forestiers.

coastal colonies (Guillard 2010: 5). In this sense, the legal or illegal collection of forest products such as woodfuel was not a particular issue.

Thus, statutory forest regulation under colonial rule created a dual regime characterised by small islands of gazetted areas under a strict extraction regime that was enforced by a forest brigade, albeit loosely. This institution of power endured after Independence and interestingly, while statutory regulation shifted towards more inclusive forestry, it resulted in tighter control over woodfuel production.

After Independence this pool of ground-level forest civil servants was maintained but their job became more elaborate. They were initially attached to the colonial civil administration, or '*cantonnement*' at the time (Guillard 2010). The status of forest agents was transformed by decree into four categories in 1960 including the *préposés*, in charge of minor project execution and surveillance, *Controleurs* in charge of the application of law within the different *cantonnements*, *Ingenieurs* in charge of the direction, organisation and management of large-scale projects (presumably those like dams and large-scale plantations) and finally *Ingenieurs de Travaux* in charge of the direction and conception of large-scale projects as well as research.⁷⁸ The two first professional categories of civil servants were posted on the ground '*to execute forest plans (plantations, tree nursery, soil conservation, delimitations, the management of fishing and hunting activities and topographical works) and he is in charge of enforcing laws pertaining forest, soil conservation, hunting and fishing*'.⁷⁹

In the gazetted forests, their job was to enforce restrictive access. In the *forêts protégées* their role was to undertake and oversee the execution of large-scale plantation which epitomised the forestry approach at the time and consisted of replacing indigenous species deemed low-value with fast growing exotic ones such as *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*, *Cassia siamea*, *Gmelina arborea*, *Azadirachta indica* (Kabore et al. 2004).

⁷⁸ Decree no. 564-PRES-TFP-P Portant statuts particuliers des corps du personnel du cadres des eaux et forêts.

⁷⁹ Decree no. 1970 132 PRES-TFP-P Portant création des agents techniques des eaux et forêts (my translation).

This approach was common throughout the Sahel and responded to both woodfuel production and ecological concerns over desertification inherited from colonial forestry, and which viewed local farming practices as a cause of environmental degradation (Ribot 1999). So at the time, the forest agent was the only interface between the state and local resource users over woodfuel. However their relation was only really strained in the handful of gazetted forests where it was still forbidden to produce woodfuel.

At the end of the 1970's, three factors converged and led to a shift towards more inclusive approaches to forestry. Firstly this must be understood within the context of growing global narratives around sustainable development, which advocated a shift from centralised to more participative approaches to forestry (Adams 2008). Secondly the pitfalls of centralised forestry approaches were becoming clear in Burkina at the time. As noted by Simeni (2007, 22) '*the industrial plantations were undertaken on farmlands, whereas the production of woodfuel was destined for urban populations. Since farmers did not gain anything from this arrangement, the maintenance of plantations became difficult to enforce*' (my translation). So while their effectives grew, the lack of ground-level forest agents relative to the task allocated were difficult to maintain without the cooperation of neighbouring residents (CILSS 2005).⁸⁰ A third factor is the important rainfall shortages with the dramatic consequences that we know, which raised alarms about the issues of ecological degradation and deforestation. Large amounts of drought-driven international research at that time pointed a finger on connections between deforestation and the uncontrolled extraction of woodfuel used as the main source of energy. The work of Bertrand (1977), the CILSS (1978) and that of Chavin (1981) on Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso, as an 'African town on the brink of an energy crisis' were particularly influential in this regard.⁸¹ Together, these converging factors encouraged government and donors to undertake a policy shift towards more focused attention to the production of

⁸⁰ At that time also (1976), the Ministry of Environment was created and forest agents became detached from the *catonnement* administrative system (that political elites strived to undermine with the creation of *département*, as described in the previous Chapter) and they were then directly answerable to the ministry, as they still are today.

⁸¹ His work informed much of the FAO thinking at the time, and probably also accounts for their support later on. (<http://www.fao.org/docrep/p3350f/p3350f03.htm>)

woodfuel, and more inclusive relations between resource producers and forestry institutions.

In 1981, the first national forest policy was adopted and marked a significant turn in that direction. Two national programmes were adopted: the *Politique d'Aménagement des Forêts Classées* and the programme '*bois de village*' (Ouédraogo 2004, 8). These respectively targeted the gazetted and non-gazetted forests and together they articulated around three main axes: 1) the physical delimitation of gazetted forests and the restoration of (illegally) cleared areas within these forests; 2) local technical training in woodcutting for both woodfuel and timber; and 3) localised tree plantation (still of exotic species) operations destined for round timber (Yanogo 2006, Zongo 2010). Overall these programmes aimed to 'satisfy the need of populations in timber products (woodfuel and timber) while preserving the environment' (Sawadogo 2006, 4).

Whether this objective was met is not clear, but what is significant is that these programmes marked a significant shift in the way forest agents and local populations would relate: in the gazetted areas, restrictive measures over timber products still applied (Hagberg 1998). However, forest agents would collaborate with local populations, for example drawing on local knowledge about where to best locate plantation sites. In non-gazetted areas, forests management plans were provisioned for forest agent and local residents to collaborate around the creation of a woodfelling rotation system based around scientific ecological technical specifications (Zongo 2010). In this sense, the participatory policy shift envisaged that the local authority that governed forest management on the ground would have more contact with local populations than they did during the colonial era and the period after independence when forestry approaches to woodfuel production were characterised by large-scale plantations in non-gazetted forests and protection in gazetted ones.

These programmes were stalled by the volatile political context between 1980 and 1983. However, they had to be described here to understand the regulatory shift that transformed institutional power over woodfuel carried forward later. While under colonial rule sticky statutory regulation placed the state as the only institution of

power over forest resources, little oversight was exercised until Independence when the number of forest agents grew, and when national and international attention started turning to the production of woodfuel as an object of necessary regulation.

Forestry under the CNR rule: centralising woodfuel

As with the mining sector, the mid-1980s was a period of intense national reform in the forestry sector. Under the rule of the *Conseil National de la Révolution* (1983-1987), the *Politique d'Aménagement* was built upon because it matched the populist ideology driving the revolutionary regime. Two major changes were introduced: the first one introduced centralised taxation over the production of woodfuel, and the second one was the initiation of community-based civil society institutions. Both fundamentally changed the face of institutional power over woodfuel production.

The first measure, the centralisation of woodfuel control, does not seem to be a particularly inclusive measure but in fact the regulation aimed to work in the favour of small-scale woodcutters. As early as 1984, a few months after the *coup d'état*, the CNR imposed restrictive laws to regulate woodfuel extraction and commercialisation.⁸² This was carried out as part of an anti-deforestation national programme articulated around 'Three Struggles', which included the fights against bushfires, the roaming of husbandry animals, and uncontrolled woodfuel extraction.⁸³ The main problem perceived by the regime at the time was the erratic woodfuel extraction practices of wholesale woodfuel merchants supplying the capital Ouagadougou. Merchants brought in the bush their own team of woodcutters who had no other matter at heart than to fill up their trucks (Delnooz 2003, 7). Statutory regulation under the CNR aimed first and foremost to control their activity.

In order to prevent merchants from freely entering and devastating the bush, the CNR adopted a legal decree in May 1984 that distinguished and codified the different

⁸² It appears that these laws are in fact the first ones that ever legislated the extraction of woodfuel, but this was difficult to establish based on the second-hand literature and the significance of this period only became clear after returning from fieldwork so no first-hand accounts could be collected.

⁸³ Ordonnance n° 85-47 du 29 août 1985 portant réglementation des feux de brousse, de l'exploitation du bois de chauffe et du charbon de bois et de la divagation des animaux domestiques. Although he strongly condemned neo-colonial oppression of African peoples, Sankara's forest programme strongly echoed the laws that were passed during the colonial period. (see for example the bushfire legislation passed in the early 1930s: <http://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/ner2295.pdf>)

professional categories involved in the woodfuel sector: woodcutters (*'débitteurs'*), wholesale-merchants (*'grossistes-transporteurs'*) and retailers (*'détaillant'*).⁸⁴ The decree aimed to grant woodcutters more power over woodfuel production vis-à-vis merchants. To this effect, it clearly disaggregated woodcutters from wholesale merchants by imposing that each professional category acquires a professional card with an associated woodfuel quota: woodcutters were to acquire a woodcutting permit associated with a certain volume of timber, while wholesale merchants were liable to acquire a yearly renewable professional card, and they were attributed quota that restricted the amount of wood they were able to purchase.⁸⁵ As such, the decree introduced three new state-sanctioned institutions of power within the woodfuel resource-authority nexus. In addition they expanded the spatial reach of legal/illegal woodfuel production beyond the restrictions of the gazetted forests: from then on, woodcutters and merchants operating without a permit were deemed illegal, even in protected forests.

It should be noted that these measures were applied in practice, if we judge by the resistance of woodfuel merchants. The measures aimed at protecting woodcutters against the exploitative practices of merchants as the latter could no longer bring their own teams of woodcutters to the bush, but they had to buy the woodfuel that was extracted by local woodcutters who had acquired a woodfuel permit with the local forest agent. Ribot (1999, 293) recalls that these regulatory frameworks were very unpopular with merchants such that in the early 1990s they rebelled and stopped the transport of woodfuel to the capital creating significant shortages (Sawadogo and Yoni 2009, 31). While it is not exactly clear what merchants rebelled against (the quotas or the professional cards?), the point here is that the woodfuel policies put into place at the time of Sankara did not initially work to their advantage and the

⁸⁴ Circulaire n° 346 bis MET-CAPRO du 14 May 1984 portant réglementation provisoire de l'exploitation du bois et du charbon de bois au Burkina Faso.

⁸⁵ I was not able to find the legal text that stipulates this explicitly. However, Article 12 of the Circulaire n° 346 bis MET-CAPRO du 14 May 1984 notes that 'all or part of the quota of a wholesale merchant who is unable to honour his engagement can be attributed to another certified merchant' thus implicitly indicating that they were subjected to quotas. These quotas were recalculated every year on the basis of 'renewability' of the resource however scholarship on woodfuel in the Sahel has cast significant doubt over the extent to which this is the case. Ribot (2001) for example clearly shows that the ways in which these quotas are set is in fact rather arbitrary and in Senegal depends on the goodwill of bureaucrats operating at national level. Several studies of deforestation in the Sahel have also challenged the idea that these permits have any impact on the renewability of the resources (Leach and Fairhead 1996, Cline-Cole 1998).

opposition by wholesale merchants described by Ribot shows that this was to some extent applied in practice, and tighter control was exercised over woodfuel.⁸⁶ Thus the introduction of these permits resulted in tighter government control over woodfuel production, and thereby also decreased autonomy for the new state-sanctioned institutions of power involved in woodfuel production.

The second milestone measure that was introduced under the CNR rule was the creation of woodcutter cooperatives as a new institution of power over woodfuel production. This measure drew upon the community forestry approach that had been outlined in the 1981 *Politique d'aménagement des forêts classées*. It was initially carried out thanks to UNDP support to a project that specifically aimed to address alarms about upcoming woodfuel shortages in the capital, Ouagadougou. It was implemented by the FAO in 1985 through a project called BKF/85/011 '*Aménagement et Exploitation des Forêts pour le ravitaillement de Ouagadougou en bois de feu*' that is nowadays famous for characterising one of the pioneering approach to community forestry in the Sahelian sub-region (Bellefontaine, Gaston, and Petrucci 1997).

The adoption of this project is quite surprising because Sankara strongly advocated some distance from the international donor community (Prairie 2007), and it is surprising that the CNR regime accepted to collaborate with the UNDP and the FAO over the BKF project. At the same time the community forestry approach also coincided with the populist ideological inclination that advocated a strong civil society rooted in line with the principle whereby 'the land belongs to those who cultivate it' (Jaffre 1989). The project introduced by the donors coincided with this ideal. It supported the creation of local woodcutter cooperatives that would control woodfuel extraction within designated areas where most of the woodfuel was produced to supply the capital city. What is significant here is that the institutional landscape governing woodfuel extraction no longer just involved the forest agent on the ground. The project brought in by the FAO and supported by the regime made

⁸⁶ The significance of understanding the role of forest agents only emerged after returning from the field so I was not able to collect first hand data on the extent to which this arrangement was enforced in practice. I was also not able to find second hand data on that particular aspect of woodfuel legislation enforcement in that period.

space for village-level cooperatives to organise production and exercise authority over the way woodfuel was produced.

Thus the CNR rule introduced two new players in the landscape of institutional power over woodfuel resources. Firstly the introduction of woodfuel permits mean that the state became a hegemonic player in the regulation of woodfuel production across national space, rather than simply in the gazetted forests since all extraction activities had to be authorised by state agents through the purchasing of permits. Secondly the introduction of woodcutter cooperatives distinguished woodcutters between those who operate within cooperatives and those who do not.

The CNR rule was short-lived, and under that regime only the project mentioned above was implemented. In order to understand how these measures contributed to the creation of a dual regulatory regime over woodfuel resource access in Burkina, we must examine how these two measures were appropriated and expanded under the post-revolutionary liberalisation era, which is examined below.

Community-based woodfuel concessions: controlled liberalisation

After the CNR was overthrown in 1987, the woodfuel fiscal policy was re-read and transformed in a way that has been characterised as a shift towards 'controlled liberalisation' (MMCE 2005, 40-42). This refers to a regulatory shift whereby on the one hand central government continued to control woodfuel production and imposed, through woodcutting permits, a maximum price on producers per cubic meter of wood, while on the other, it made space for private actors to organise production, albeit under the woodcutter cooperative model introduced by the donor project. The 'private' element lays in the distinction whereby under the project that was carried out under the CNR rule, the technical aspects of the woodfuel concession was directed by a civil servant forest engineer, while in the projects that followed after the CNR rule woodfuel concessions were directed by private forest engineers hired by the woodcutter cooperative (Delnooz 2003, Bouda et al. 2011). In other words, the centralised fiscal regime introduced under the CNR rule was retained, but woodcutter

cooperatives became technically independent from government agencies within woodfuel concessions.

These measures were maintained because they suited well the new liberal objectives whereby the “organisation and liberalisation of timber product markets will guarantee better competition between operators and a better distribution of benefits between operators from this commodity chain” (MMCE 2005: 34, my translation).⁸⁷ The liberal ‘domestic energy strategy’ adopted after the CNR rule also further encouraged the creation of woodfuel concessions, albeit with the support of donor funding (CILSS 2001). In order to understand how these transformed institutional power exercised over woodfuel, we must examine how these concessions work in a little more detail.

The areas targeted for community-based woodfuel concessions were brought under a specific extraction regime specified by a forest management plan and spatially delineated as a Forest Management Unit (FMU, *Chantier d'Aménagement Forestier* in French).⁸⁸ The establishment of FMUs require the creation of village-level cooperatives made up of local resident woodcutters organised as Forest Management Committees (FMCs, *Groupements de Gestion Forestière* in french). Local woodcutters are expected to come forward on a voluntary basis to form FMCs so that one FMC is created for each village included in an area that is targeted for an FMU. The number of FMCs created together formed a Union of FMCs who has the monopoly over woodcutting activity within the area delimited for the FMU woodfuel concession. In other words, only those residents in the area can become members of the FMC and only the FMC are able to exploit woodfuel in the area under a FMU, which I refer to as a woodfuel concession.

The vision underlying the creation and multiplication of community-based woodfuel concessions was that while “*some small production happens outside the FMUs [...]*

⁸⁷ There is a very small reserve of roundwood in Burkina, and timber here actually refers to woodfuel rather than construction.

⁸⁸ These are defined as ‘*a technical and administrative entity comprising one or several forested areas that are administered by the same directional institution that are prescribed in the Forest Management Plan. Physically, the Forest Management Unit corresponds to a poorly managed area. It is made up of forest management sub-units that each comprise one or several plots subjected to the same forestry technique and management rules*’ (MECV 2010: 11, my translation).

the part of this non-managed production will naturally decrease with time [...] One day, there will only be FMUs left to supply the entire woodfuel demand".⁸⁹ The objective therefore was to multiply the number of woodfuel concession over the country so that all the woodfuel produced is extracted by woodcutter cooperatives. Today there are over 30 community-based woodfuel concessions, or FMUs, in Burkina that cover some 700,000 ha (Gautier et al. 2009, 12). Their creation has been largely dependent on international donor support and the extent to which all of them continue to operate after support was withdrawn is questionable (Dié 2011, 18). Nevertheless these institutions expanded and as such, so did the territorial reach of statutory regulation, at least nominally.

FMUs have often, though not systematically, been created within gazetted forests, because these are places where the extraction of woodfuel is intense and provides the growing demand in the capital city. As explained above, gazetted forests are situated in areas vegetation cover is dense, and where the timber demand from the colonial railway could be satisfied. These areas are also those where timber resources are abundant and therefore where woodfuel can easily be produced. As noted by the current General Director of Fauna and Forests at the Ministry of Environment:

"The idea behind this was for the state to open up the gazetted forests and to transform them into forests with a regime of controlled exploitation because at that time, scientific studies started to show that it was possible to exploit a forest while conserving it through a scientific system of woodcutting rotation."

Ministry of Environment staff, Ouagadougou, interview on 11.04.2012

The reason for 'opening up the gazetted forests' aligns with the participative approach that advocated a shift away from strict protection in the gazetted areas at the time, but the restrictive regime over woodfuel production was maintained in gazetted forests where no FMUs were created.

The vision whereby most woodfuel production would take place within FMUs was only partially realised because much woodfuel production continues to take place outside FMUs, and in these places however production has come to be qualified as

⁸⁹ This quote is from a member of staff from one of the project implementing FMUs and has been extracted from Delnooz (2003, 7).

‘informal’ or ‘non-managed’. Under controlled liberalisation the landscape of institutional power over woodfuel transformed in important ways: firstly, in gazetted forests, woodfuel continues to be prohibited, and this prohibition continues to be enforced by the forest agent locally. Secondly, some gazetted forests were opened for woodfuel production and brought under FMU woodfuel concessions, which multiplied under liberalisation policies and with donor support. Thirdly, woodfuel production continues to largely take place outside these concessions. For woodfuel production to be legal outside concessions, woodfuel production must be authorised by the ground-level forest agent by way of woodcutting permits acquired in exchange of a fixed tariff. In 2005 a government report acknowledges that ‘the market share of the formal wood market covers only 15 to 20% of the total demand of woodfuel’ (MMCE 2005, 41, author’s translation). In areas that are neither a gazetted forest nor a FMU, woodfuel production is referred to as ‘fraudulent’ because it *‘comes from a non-organised commodity chain characterised by direct modes of production whereby carters and cyclists cut wood in their own village’* (Ouédraogo 2004, 17-18, Gautier and Compaore 2006). As such, the creation of woodfuel concessions created a new dividing line between regulated and unregulated activity.

Therefore unlike the mining sector where small-scale mining extraction has become illegal outside of AAM concession because the CBMP has disappeared, in the forestry sector, woodfuel regulation continues to be exercised by the central government but production outside FMU woodfuel concessions is considered informal or fraudulent. What is interesting however is not to point out the existence of this dual regulatory arrangement, but rather to examine what distinguishes them.

Below I show that the different statutory regulation applied inside and outside concessions has given rise to a form of institutional power whereby production inside and outside woodfuel concessions is distinguished by the level of autonomy exercised by woodcutters over woodfuel production and vis-à-vis government sanction.

Autonomy for woodcutters outside FMUs

Within the FMUs, woodcutters enjoy less autonomy over the production of woodfuel than those who produce woodfuel outside, because FMUs are under a special

regulatory regime. Firstly, in order to organise woodcutting work, the FMCs are obliged to draft a forest management plan (*Plan d'Aménagement Forestier*) that identifies when and where woodfuel can be cut.⁹⁰ In order to elaborate such a plan, the Union of FMCs have to hire a team of technicians who make sure that the plan is elaborated according to the scientific ecological calculations perceived as necessary to ensure the renewability of forest resources.⁹¹ At the head of this team is the Technical Director who signs a contract with the Union of FMCs and whose salary comes from a management fund set up and alimented by the sales extracted by FMC woodcutters (Delnooz 2003). He oversees that the forest management plan responds to scientific criteria for the renewability of the resource and as such he is the highest authority over all members of the team operating under the FMUs.⁹²

There has been little work on the conditions of woodfuel production outside FMU concessions but we know that those producing woodfuel are not subjected to such strict working arrangements (Delnooz 2003). As explained in the previous section, the woodfuel sector was centralised under the CNR rule and a series of permits and taxes were introduced. These taxes apply to all woodcutters, merchants and retailers, but as the table below shows, those operating outside FMUs are under a less burdensome fiscal regime.

⁹⁰ Generally the FMUs are divided into 15 plots that are exploited each year on rotation basis of one plot per year over 15 years (CILSS 2007).

⁹¹ This technical side of things however been shown to be inadequate. Firstly because the scientific criteria rely on false assumptions about the renewability of forest resources, and secondly because the plan devised is generally disregarded in practice (see Ribot 2001 for the sub-region; see Delnooz 1999; Ouedraogo 2004 for Burkina Faso).

⁹² There is abundant scholarly work and grey literature that document the institutional arrangements of the FMUs, but see Coulibaly-Lingani (2011) for the most up to date appraisal.

Fiscal item description	Amount (CFA 100 = GBP 0.10)	Characteristic	Destination
Woodcutting permit	CFA 300 per m ³ of wood	Fixed and applicable at national level	Central treasury
Village development fund	CFA 200 to 600	FMU only and varies across FMUs	FMU village development fund
Professional card (for merchants)	CFA 4,000 per year	Varies across the municipalities	Communal budget
Depot permit (for retailers)	CFA 2,000 per year	Fixed and applicable at national level	Central treasury
Circulation permit	CFA 300 per m ³ of wood	Fixed and applicable at national level	Central treasury
FMU management fund	CFA 50 to 200 per m ³ of wood	FMU only and varies across FMUs	FMU management fund
Woodcutter salary	CFA 900 to 1,700 per m ³ of wood	FMU only and varies across FMUs	Woodcutter

Table3. Fiscal regime over woodfuel production in Burkina Faso (source: adapted from CILSS 2007, 20)

What is noteworthy from this table is that the fiscal regime imposed on producers operating within FMUs is more constraining than for those outside. The woodcutting permit and circulation permit need to be paid by all producers nationally and they are the taxes that the forest agent collects on the ground. Producers operating within FMUs however are subjected to three additional fiscal items so that the price of the cubic meter of woodfuel is imposed upon them. It is made up of the two taxes mentioned above, plus the village and FMU management funds that are used for collective expenses, and finally the share paid to woodcutters themselves.

In theory, FMC woodcutters define the three fiscal items and the specifications for the way funds are distributed through a nomenclature (*Cahier des Charges*). The nomenclature aims to ensure the maintenance of revenues for the entire FMU team as well as some amount redistributed to a village-level fund.⁹³ Delnooz (2003, 20) notes

⁹³ These are typical requirements for community forestry. When it was first implemented, the BKF project was clearly a pilot project in view of elaborating a model for social or community forestry as they were implemented elsewhere since the 1980s (in Nepal for example). These schemes have been shown to impose certain ecological management tools and rationality that often entrenches rather than challenges existing political imbalance in resource control (Nightingale 2005).

however “the management of funds is actually overseen by the Technical Director and the Provincial authorities, leaving the FMC members in total ignorance over the way the funds are being used”.

In addition the price of woodfuel per cubic meter is imposed on woodcutters/retailers operating in FMUs while it is not outside these concessions. The reason for imposing a selling price on woodcutters in FMUs is the fear that not doing so would give them an incentive to cut more wood than is advocated in the technical woodcutting specifications in their management plan (*Cahier des Charges*). In theory these prices are defined by the FMC but it must be approved by a decree (*circulaire*) adopted by the Ministry of Environment. In many FMUs the share paid to woodcutters has been too low for them to generate significant benefits. Numerous commodity chain analyses come to similar conclusions (Ouédraogo 2007).⁹⁴

In some places like in the Tiogo forest, woodcutters in the FMC led public demonstrations to complain about the small benefits they receive from the arrangement in FMUs, the state slightly increased the price fixated for woodcutters in FMUs (Hagberg 2001a, 491, Yelkouni 2004). In the FMU of Kari for example, wholesale merchants prefer to buy woodfuel from producers just outside the FMU because prices practiced there are lower, while in the meantime, the woodcutters operating within the FMU have troubles getting rid of their stock (SERF 2005). As such the form of institutional power that is brought to light with the analysis of woodfuel regulation is uneven whereby government sanction applies across the entire territory, but is more burdensome within woodfuel concessions.

In addition, to a less burdensome fiscal regime, producers outside woodfuel concessions are also subjected to less technical oversight. The only state-sanctioned institution of power overseeing the enforcement of taxes is the ground-level state

⁹⁴ Other studies on the internal distribution of benefits along the woodfuel commodity chain also confirm that merchants have the greater share, but they never include the state in their analyses. Delnooz (2000; cited in Sawadogo 2006: 34) shows for example that 20% of profits go to woodcutters, wholesale merchants (*grossistes*) receive 50% and retailers (*détaillants*) 30%. This state of affairs is by far not unique to Burkina and work on the formalisation of the woodfuel commodity chain also generates similar results in Mali (Hautdidier 2008).

forest agent. However forest agents have notoriously weak enforcement capacities.⁹⁵ The National Forest Direction (*Direction Nationale des Forêts*) has increased the number of its staff over the years so that between 1987 and 2003 from 473 to 752 (FAO 2010, 60). However forest agents are still meant to exercise oversight within vast areas. For example it is quite common that one forest agent has to deliver permits and patrol forests over one or more *département* that include on average 30 villages.⁹⁶ A government document reported that there are currently around 1,000 ground-level forest agents hired, which amounts to 1 agent for 25,000 to 100,000 ha areas (Dié 2011: 52). In addition forest agents are also notoriously underequipped to accomplish patrolling tasks: in addition to meagre salaries the funds allocated to equip them only amounts to 5% of national forest revenues, which would roughly amount to CFA 20,000 CFA (GBP 25) per agent and per year to maintain their working equipment on top of their revenues.⁹⁷ This effectively means that the degree of autonomy that is exercised by woodcutters over woodfuel production is expectedly higher than those operating under FMU woodfuel concessions.⁹⁸

This state of affair has not escaped the attention of the central government. It has been described as a case of ‘disloyal competition’ because production outside FMUs ‘managed’ and ‘non-managed zones’ of woodfuel extraction (Ouédraogo 2007). This is not only the case in Burkina (Bolwig et al. 2011, 91-92). This is not to say that no smuggling takes place within woodfuel concessions, and as such, the legal/illegal, or formal/informal distinction does not characterise well the form of institutional power that regulation gives rise to. A better way to characterise it is by pointing out the greater degree of autonomy that woodcutters exercise over woodfuel production and vis-à-vis government sanction.

⁹⁵ This is not unique to Burkina and see also Blundo (2012) for example in Senegal.

⁹⁶ As a forest bureaucrat, the forest agent is accountable within the ‘bureaucratic field’, for which the smallest territorial unit is spatially defined by the *département*.

⁹⁷ This is calculated based on the estimate that 1,000 foresters operate today on the ground (Dié 2011: 52), and based on averages of forest revenues of CFA 300 million (as provided by FAO 2010: 66).

⁹⁸ It is interesting to note that the creation of woodcutter cooperatives that originates under the CNR rule initially aimed to give greater control to woodcutters while over time it has contributed to empowering wholesale merchants. In this case, control over the structuration of prices effectively contributed to guaranteeing a steady income to the state and untying the hands of wholesale merchants, while reducing the room for woodcutters operating in FMUs area to make a profit out of woodfuel sales.

Conclusion: emptiness as form

This Chapter presents the second element of the politics of autonomy. The previous Chapter showed that local administration under decentralisation is characterised by the imperative of autonomy, but central governments has not been granted the rights to raise revenues from the small-scale extraction of woodfuel and gold, which somewhat exacerbates the imperative of autonomy. On the other hand regulatory shifts in the 1980s and 1990s have granted space for non-state actors to take part in the regulation of these resources. The comparative analysis through the lens of autonomy sheds light on patterns characterising the institutional landscape that emerges out of these regulatory shifts.

There are two common denominators in the enduring form of institutional power that emerge over both gold and woodfuel production. The first one is related to governability, rather than governmentality. Both have seen the emergence of non-state but government-sanctioned institutions of power over resources. In the case of small-scale mining, privately held concessions have emerged and grant the right to AAM holders to organise the small-scale production of gold. In the case of forest resources, small-scale woodfuel production became divided between woodfuel produced within and outside formal ‘community forestry’ concessions.

In the case of small-scale mining the fall of the CBMP means that there are no *de jure* institutions overseeing gold extraction and in these spaces production is referred to as ‘orpaillage’. In the woodfuel sector, state bureaucrats continue to oversee woodfuel extraction but they have very limited capacity because of limited workforce. While both resources continue to be *de jure* the property of the central state,⁹⁹ regulatory changes over small-scale gold and woodfuel extraction, privatization and community forestry respectively, have given rise to a dual regulatory regime that is characterized by varying degrees of regulatory autonomy.

In forestry, reforms followed a different trajectory. The state continues to hold a monopoly over the extraction of woodfuel resources but here too the state made space

⁹⁹ This is important because central government agencies continue to have the monopoly over the distribution of rights.

for non-state institutions. Since the 1980s central government gave the possibility for cooperatives of local woodcutters organized into Forest Management Committees to regulate the extraction of woodfuel in designated areas characterized as Forest Management Units.

An important corollary of the creation of AAMs and FUMs is that gold and woodfuel resources are both under a dual regulatory regime whereby actors extracting gold and woodfuel resources outside these concessions have more autonomy from governmental institutional power. In small-scale mining, AAM concessionaries have been practicing prices that are not to the advantage of local diggers who therefore prefer to extract gold outside these spaces, albeit illegally. In the case of woodfuel, woodcutters operating under FMUs are subjected to a strict fiscal regime that forces them to sell wood at a higher price than woodcutters that are not organized as FMUs. The main difference here is that unlike the mining sector, woodcutters who extract woodfuel outside FMUs have to obtain a permit with a state forest agent.

Regulation has given way to enduring forms of institutional power characterized by the emergence of non-state but government-sanctioned institutions of power that limit the autonomy that small-scale producers exercise over resource production. The next Chapter zooms in on these more autonomous spaces of production and examines what characterises the basis of regulatory autonomy in both cases.

Chapter 6. Twilight institutions over gold and forest resources in Séguénéga

In this chapter I analyse relations of recognition between overlapping institutions of power in Séguénéga to show how durable authority over gold and woodfuel emerges and is maintained over time. The analysis brings together another element to help us understand how uneven regulatory autonomy is the dominant form of institutional power that emerges and persists under weak states. It illustrates the significance of relations of mutual recognition between state and non-state sanctioned institutions of power that underlie the durability of this institutional form.

As highlighted in the previous Chapter, statutory regulation has given rise to certain absence of government, which is often used as an indicator that a society is governed by a ‘weak state’. This certain absence of government manifests in different ways across the mining and forestry sectors, but they resonate in the fact that outside resource concessions, producers enjoy a greater degree of autonomy over production. In Séguénéga neither an AAM nor a FMU can be found. Nevertheless, gold and forest resource production is not anarchic. This Chapter analyses relations of recognition that help understand the way public authority is exercised over the production of gold and forest resources in the everyday, and as such contributes an understanding of the way enduring forms of institutional power emerge and persist under weak states.

Twilight institutions

The institutions of power that emerge from the relations of recognition analysed in this Chapter are not systematically ‘visible’ at first sight, unlike government-sanctioned institutions, because they do not always have a name, and the public authority they are able to exercise is contextual. The analysis is informed by the concept of ‘twilight institutions’ and work on public authority ‘from below’ that has been found useful to make these institutions of power visible (Lund 2006). This literature sheds light on the fact that collectively binding decisions are often enforced by forms of institutional power that are not necessarily government-sanctioned, but emerge as a result of their relation with government-sanctioned institutions of power.

Making these institutions of power visible is crucial because they are the ones that organise resource production on the ground, and they are also therefore the ones that

local government must deal with to raise taxes and to become autonomous. In order to understand how decentralisation contributes to state formation, we must examine how the imperative of autonomy for local government collides with the degree of autonomy enjoyed by ‘twilight institutions’.

In the case of gold mining, since the disappearance of the CBMP, there is no government-sanctioned institution overseeing small-scale production in Séguénéga. However this does not mean that production is anarchic. Neither does it mean that small-scale production happens in a vacuum of government-sanctioned institutions: while they enjoy greater autonomy, producers in Séguénéga operate side by side with other government-sanctioned institutions, albeit those whose mandate is not directly connected to small-scale mining. Here I show that since the disappearance of the CBMP a group of powerful individuals, whom I call ‘shaft owners’, have emerged. The way shaft owners are recognised by these other government-sanctioned institutions is what allows shaft owners to exercise public authority in a durable way. This means that while shaft owners are powerful locally, they are also fragile. The twilight here is not only characterised by the fact that there are private individuals exercising public authority (Lund 2006), but more crucially it helps characterise the relation that underlies the emergence and persistence of these institutions, as ambiguous and hence potentially fragile.

In the case of woodfuel, a similar institutional form emerges. Woodcutters enjoy a certain degree of autonomy over the organisation of production because there is no FMU concession and government-sanction is weak. In Séguénéga there is no FMU, and a forest agent alone regulates state-sanctioned access to woodfuel resources. However his capacities to enforce state-sanctioned regulation are weak. Here again this does not mean that production is anarchic. Indeed regulating woodfuel extraction is not only a concern of the government, but also one for local residents who see forest resources declining overtime. In this context, public authority over the production of woodfuel is exercised by a group of individuals, whom I call ‘*tiis nanamse*’ (sg. *tiis naaba*, or lord of the trees in English). They act as ‘intermediaries’ between the forest agent and resource producers. An analysis of relations of recognition between the forest agent and producers makes *tiis nanamse* visible as an

institution of power over woodfuel production. Here again *tiis nanamse* operate ‘at the twilight’ in the sense that they are ‘private’ individuals exercising ‘public authority’, defined, after Lund (2006: 767) as ‘the ability to enforce collectively binding decisions’ over the production of resources.

Together these cases illustrate the significance of relations of recognition in the emergence and persistence of institutional power under conditions of weak states. The aim here is not to make a typology of relations of recognition that underlie the emergence and endurance of these institutions, but rather to qualify these institutions and the relation they entertain with government-sanctioned institutions in the everyday. In this Chapter I show that the degree of autonomy that resource producers enjoy is an asset, but also a liability. Indeed highlighting the fragile quality of institutions of power that exercise public authority over resource production is important to understand the kind of relation these institutions of power entertain with local government, which is tackled in Chapters Seven and Eight. Shaft owners and *tiis nanamse* have emerged as powerful institutions that enjoy certain degrees of autonomy over resource production. Moreover, the fact that they rely on relations of recognition means that their authority is fragile, and they will need to be recognised further, albeit, in the democratic field of decentralisation.

Gold fields in the twilight: shaft owners and supervisors in Séguénéga

In the commune of Séguénéga, *orpaillage* is omnipresent. It is hard to find a household that does not in some way or another benefit from gold mining. Farmers have engaged with gold mining as a dry season activity for almost 30 years. As pointed out before, *orpaillage* started during the Sankara regime when one of the

most severe droughts of the century hit the Sahel. In the commune of Séguénéga, the discovery of gold is remembered to have started in four villages, including Bakou where most of the data analysed here were collected. It is common to hear that Séguénéga has ‘grown’ out of the gold found there.

Orpaillage takes place by manually digging underground shafts, often using dynamite. The shafts can reach as deep as 100 meters in some of the oldest sites. These are dug by teams of diggers underground, and teams of labourer who pull the mineral from up above; the rock mineral is placed in bags that are stacked up in one place for a while. When a significant amount of bags have been filled and stacked, they are shared among diggers and this is how they get paid. The rock mineral is then crushed by hand into smaller pieces of rock, and fed into fuel-powered machines that crush it further into dust. That dust is then carefully washed onto carpets where the heavy gold powder is retained. The silt discarded is sometimes sold depending on the value of the site where it comes from, while the silt retained on the carpets is treated with either cyanide or mercury, the latter being the most common, to obtain agglomerated mineral.¹⁰⁰ The mineral is then sold, either through illegal channels with buyers at markets in mining camps or in Séguénéga, or with a registered gold counter (Figure 6).¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Orpaillage miners often make a point that they do not like to work with cyanide, because it is a dangerous chemical. They are well-aware of the health risks associated with the use of chemicals (Tschakert and Singha 2007), and they take the precautions they can. I was told that one kg of mercury can be bought at CFA 150,000. Supervisors wait until they have what they expect to be the equivalent of 6g to undertake mercury work (gold digger, Bakou, interview on 28.07.2011). Those who control the mercury trade is another interesting question that was beyond the scope of this research to study in detail.

¹⁰¹ The first option is generally preferred because it offers more advantageous prices; however prominent shaft supervisors use the latter option when they have big quantities of mineral to sell (gold digger, Bakou, interview on 02.08.2011). This again demonstrates the porous boundary between legality and illegality whereby gold that is produced illegally, i.e. without a license, is sold legally, i.e. to a state-sanctioned gold counter.



Figure 6. An illustration of *orpaillage* mining in Bakou

While most of the digging work takes place in the four villages cited above, and while it started as a ‘livelihood diversification strategy’ (Tschakert 2009, Johnsson and Bryceson 2009), a considerable amount of people now work on these sites all year round. In this sense, *orpaillage* mining is not a mere livelihood diversification strategy anymore; for many in Séguénéga, like elsewhere, it is a full-time occupation. Since the sharp rise in global gold prices in the mid-2000s *orpaillage* activities have

greatly intensified and it has required increasingly sophisticated working and institutional arrangements.

Within this complex arrangement, shaft owners stand out as particularly powerful actors. They constitute and manage the teams of diggers and labourers, they decide when and how bags are distributed, they own machines that crush the rocks. At the village market-place they have built straw warehouse, called *zanga* in mooré. They serve as offices for shaft supervisors: there, they keep their own stone-crushing machine, they gather the workers when it is time to share the ore, they undertake the agglomeration work with mercury. From there, they also buy gold from the diggers – though because of the lack of AAM, the latter are free to choose who they want to sell to. These individuals have become so prominent that their family members who ‘made it’ to the capital Ouagadougou explain enthusiastically ‘*orpaillage is a blessing because we do not have to support them financially anymore. Sometimes we even go ask them for money at the village!*’ (native from Bakou, Ouagadougou, interview on 21.11.2012). In the absence of government-sanctioned regulation one question that comes to mind is who these individuals are, and how did they manage to lay and maintain claims on the shafts? In this section I show that shaft owners have become the most important institutional form of power that governs the production of gold resources in Séguénéga. An analysis of relations of recognition between overlapping institutions of power helps understand how these shaft owners have emerged and maintained authority over gold production over time in a context of apparent vacuum of government-sanctioned regulation over small-scale gold production.

The CBMP and lineage holders: sons of the area in Bakou

Like other places in the country, the mining boom has attracted a number of migrants up in Séguénéga (Werthmann 2009). However in Bakou, and surrounding gold digging villages, shaft owners are all from the area. In Bakou, there are many shallow shafts, but the oldest and deepest shafts are located on top of a little hill and arranged along several lines of shafts (see top left photo, figure 6) and all except one line ‘belong’ to men in Bakou. In general a rule applies whereby those who ‘saw the gold first’ become able to control the shaft (Werthmann 2003). Village residents are of course more likely to have been the first to stumble across the gold in their village and

it is understandable that they should be able to control the shafts. This is true in Bakou, but also in other villages around. In Guibou for example, one man recalls that *'the village chief once won 2kg and 125g of gold in one night'* (gold digger, Bakou, interview on 01.04.2012). In Gambo, the village neighbouring Bakou, one man controls most of the shafts and he managed to acquire such control *'because a lot of it is on his fathers' lands, so he decided who can dig and where'* (municipal councillor, Séguénéga, interview on 24.12.2012). It would appear then that in line with ethnographic work conducted in other places in the country, institutions of power over *orpaillage* emerge on a 'first come, first serve' basis. While this is true to some extent in Séguénéga, it is a little more complicated too. Indeed, it is important to note that shaft owners are certain sons of the area. Below I show that the way certain individuals were recognised at the time when the CBMP agent operated in Séguénéga helps explain how shaft owners have emerged.

At the time when the CBMP existed it had sent an agent in Séguénéga. The agent, the *sanem naaba*, is bitterly remembered by shaft owners because he *'forced people to sell gold at a low price, and he would beat people up when they did not sell with him'* (Shaft owner, Bakou, interview on 12.12.2012). At the same time the CBMP agent did not operate alone. As noted in Chapter Five, he hired local buyers who bought the gold from the diggers. The local buyers were often sons of the area, and when the CBMP agent left, the buyers remained, albeit, 'without a boss'. Nothing of the CBMP remains today, and indeed some of the younger generation of miners in their early thirties hardly know what the CBMP is. Many of the shaft owners in Bakou however remember it well, and all of them used to work with the CBMP as local buyers. It is by virtue of that 'expertise' that they became able to claim some authority over shafts after the CBMP agent disappeared.

At the time, the CBMP agent worked with specific individuals who were in charge of specific shafts, and the diggers had to sell the gold dug out to these specific individuals (ex-CBMP agent in Séguénéga, Ouagadougou, interview on 30.03.2012). When the CBMP disappeared, there was no longer a fixed tariff that diggers must pay, but it transformed in a sort of 'rent' that diggers must pay to 'those who own the

shafts' (gold digger, Bakou, interview on 28.04.2012; and gold digger, Bakou, interview on 29.04.2012).

Important amounts of wealth have been generated through this rule, and this has allowed shaft owners to remain in charge and to become the boss. It is difficult to establish how much exactly these miners make, and no systematic investigation was undertaken to try to establish that, however it is possible to give a sense of this wealth through the disparities between gold diggers and shaft owners. Some opened up proudly to the question and one shaft owner in Bakou for example tells me one day that *'money is coming in good, these days I get 1 or 2 millions a year, I built 2 houses in Séguénéga and 1 in Ouagadoudou [the capital of the country]'* (shaft owner, Séguénéga, interview on 02.08.2011). A digger in Sima tells me on the other hand: *'I can get 100,000 with gold in a year, maybe I spend 30,000 for clothes, 10,000 for friend gold-digger who didn't get anything'* (gold digger, Sima, interview on 13.08.2011). The figures do not aim to be representative of course. In addition both respondents had incentives to downplay their earnings. What is noteworthy however, is the contrast between them, which is indicative of the disparities of earnings among the *orpaillage* mining community. As such, the rules that have been adopted in Bakou have allowed shaft owners to accumulate significant wealth and to maintain their position as bosses.

Shaft owners are sons of the area and they have invested in local businesses. It has been argued elsewhere about *orpaillage* mining that 'while perhaps raising average income in Burkina Faso, this process does not lead to investment in productive enterprise or capital' and that it 'forms another instance of economic growth through primary sector dependence' (Abbink and van Dokkum 2008, 8). In the commune of Séguénéga, this is not true. Shaft owners have turned into entrepreneurs, and they have invested in the town in significant and long-lasting ways (building houses and opening businesses, including pharmacies, stationaries, and mechanical repair shops). Many people blame gold for the high commodity prices practiced in the locality ranging both consumer goods and staple foods. The important point to be taken away is that while *orpaillage* miners consume, they also produce the economy; so one obvious aspect that underlies the shaft owners' authority is that they are bosses

beyond the shaft. As they employ a significant number of people and they have become economically and politically powerful as a result. At the same time, a corollary of the accumulation of wealth is that it creates jealousies.

In order to understand how it was possible for shaft owners to maintain their claims over other 'sons of Bakou', we must examine relations of recognition between ex-CBMP buyers and landed authorities in Bakou. A first element to be brought to view is the fact that the village of Bakou is a little particular in two senses: firstly, Bakou is made of only two lineages (*buudu*, pl. *buudse*), while other villages often count more lineages. Secondly, both lineages pertain one single 'ethnic', or rather 'occupational' group, that of the hunters (*teonse*) (gold digger, Bakou, interview on 03.04.2012). *Orpaillage* miners in Bakou are often described as particularly protective of this unity through gold and the fact that they are *teonse* is often invoked as a reason for the strong solidarity between shaft supervisors in that village, and may partly explain why these rules emerged strongly and were enforceable there.

A second element of answer is to be found in the arrangements that lineage holders negotiated with shaft owners over time. I was explained that 4 or 5 years ago in Bakou a new rule emerged regarding bag sharing from the minerals pulled out of the shafts. It was agreed that a certain number of bags extracted from the shafts must go to 'those who own the land where the shaft is'. This rule emerged when some Bakou residents who were not being so lucky with finding gold decided that '*since they are not able to cultivate there anymore they should at least get something*', as one of them put it (gold digger, Bakou, interview on 04.04.2012).¹⁰² The sharing arrangements vary between shafts and shaft owners, and 'land owners', but what is significant here is that the shaft owners became able to lay durable claims on the line of shafts through the way their recognition by the CBMP intersected with that of lineage holders in Bakou.

¹⁰² It should be noted that while this system seems to reflect a progressive enclosure of resources that deviates from the long tradition of 'land inalienability' in West Africa. I think it is actually the contrary because it is not actually enclosed, that is delimited, and the arrangements remain negotiable between parties, a corollary of the lack of certainty about the future. In addition, this practice of rent is actually aligned with the longer tradition of land loans whereby those 'borrowing' land from a lineage are expected to bring a share of the harvest, if it has been a good one (Saul 1993). The only difference in this case is that the share is fixed.

The most prolific shafts on top of the hill are located on the territory of one family lineage and they are controlled by two individuals who are often referred to as two of the richest men in Bakou. For example upon entering the compound of one of them, one walks by a series of men sat crushing stones. Behind them, there are several dozens of bags are piled up against the mud walls of the compounds and containing rough stones that await to be crushed. Rasmane manages a few shafts himself, but most of these bags, which he refers to as a 'guarantee' or savings, do not come from these shafts; they are the rent that is paid to him from the shafts situated on the '*land that his father used to cultivate*'. (Shaft owner, Bakou, interview on 01.05.2012). The man who owns the second line of shafts up on the hill has his compound nearby; it is the biggest house in the village; a cement house, an unusual sight in a village situated 50km away from the nearest tarmac road. The house is also two-floors-high. It has sofas and cushions, a TV and DVD player inside. Younger shaft supervisors in Bakou explain that this wealth is only recent, '*before that rule, he used to wear half trousers on his bike, now he wears full-length trousers and rides in a car!*' (gold digger, Bakou, interview on 28.04.2012).

Shaft owners often complained that 'rent' was not always paid, '*unless he went to them*' (gold digger, Bakou, interview on 03.04.2012). While the state of his belongings seems to suggest that he must be going to them quite often, this remark also brings to the fore another aspect of recognition that must be taken into account, i.e. while shaft owners are not the only institution of power exercising authority over gold production in Bakou.

The accumulation of wealth: Diggers and shaft supervisors

Some serious amounts of wealth have been accumulated, and the *orpaillage* economy has evolved into diverse jobs. While sons of the area have benefitted from the disappearance of the CBMP, it does not mean that the work organisation is egalitarian by any means. In order to understand the conditions under which the authority of shaft owners is maintained, we must examine the way relations of recognition unfold within this unequal socio-economic system, paying specific attention to the way the relation between gold diggers and shaft supervisors produces the public authority of the shaft owners. While shaft owners and lineage holders control some revenues from

the shafts, they are not necessarily those deciding how the work is done within the shafts. Oftentimes, shaft owners rent out a shaft to a shaft supervisor who assembles a team of diggers.

Ethnographic work has gone a long way to show that 'the seemingly irrational squandering of money is in fact a form of redistribution' (Werthmann 2010, 71-72), making the case for a moral economy operating within mining camps and which is based on the normative principle that a person who permanently deceives others will eventually be sanctioned. So seen from this point of view, the fact that fortunes come and go is an underlying factor of solidarity and order rather than chaos. One way for shaft owners to maintain their authority therefore is for shaft supervisors to take care of their diggers. This usually comes across in the way bags of mineral are shared out, which differs depending on the shafts and between the shaft owners. A thirty year old miner who hires teams of diggers on 3 shafts in Bakou said to me that once 300 bags had been pulled out of the three shafts he divided them evenly between himself and the miners. He keeps one half to cover the diggers' food, travel and health expenses. His uncle has one shaft over the hill in Bakou where 10 to 20 labourers are employed and he claims that out of 10 bags pulled out of the ground, eight go to the diggers, one to his wife to cook for the diggers, and he keeps one to himself. The other half that goes to the miners is divided between the different teams that worked on the three different shafts.

It is not easy to be a good boss he confesses, but it is important otherwise the diggers run away. Some new shafts can take several weeks before any sort of sharing is done, or before any ore is found in the mineral shared and in that sense there is vast room for negotiation between diggers and those who employ them, which does not always go to the latter's advantage. One of them in Bakou explained that he was having a hard time finding diggers on one of his shafts. One digger reports how he ran away from the shaft because the conditions offered were not good:

We left because we couldn't get along with the shaft owner: when we pulled out 10 bags, the shaft owner took 7, the owner of the water machine took 2, and we were 27 diggers left with one bag. Really, is that enough? So we just picked up and left'

Gold digger, Sima, interview on 13.08.2011

What is significant is that to some extent, the authority of shaft owners is maintained through certain work ethics that is very specific to *orpaillage* work. Another dimension to this pertains to the ways shaft owners relate to manual work, which is a difficult and dangerous one. In Bakou, shaft supervisors rarely go down in the shafts these days; however one of them enthusiastically noted that *'of course he does when he has to!'* (Shaft supervisor, Bakou, interview on 01.05.2012). While those who control shafts do not really need to go down anymore and seem to have it easy nowadays, they have all gradually worked their way up from digger to shaft supervisor, and they take great pride in that. One of them for example a photo picturing himself descending down a shaft framed and hung it at the entrance of his house. Another less prominent shaft supervisor in Bakou explains that *'if you do not go down the shaft sometimes, especially when issues arise below, the diggers won't respect you, they'll get demotivated and leave or steal stuff from the shaft'* (Shaft supervisor, Gambo, interview on 26.07.2011). If the diggers get demotivated and leave, it is impossible to sustain production, and thereby also for shaft owners to maintain their claims over shafts.

At the same time, there are also differentiations among shaft supervisors. As seen above, the rules that have been set up have benefited particular individuals, and in any one mining village more and less prominent shaft supervisors have emerged. As a general rule, shaft owners are older and wealthier than shaft supervisors; at the same time, some young men are also shaft owners. These are generally those who have benefitted from the 'lineage holder rent'.

One 30 something shaft supervisor from Bakou explains that when he started a few years ago he was forced to borrow a lot of money from his uncle to build his house, now he has repaid the loan and he has his own shop in town, but 'he is not a boss': *'Maybe once I have several shafts in several places, people will start to follow me. At the moment he has a 'petit' who works for him, he spends money for him- at the moment I am working towards that. Moumouni, my uncle, is a real 'boss', everyone in Séguénéga knows him. One day I'll be like that'* (shaft supervisor, Bakou, interview on 08.12.2011).

Another way in which the claims of shaft owners are enforced is through the way they reinvest the money they have made. For example, one reason for the increase of artisanal gold mining in the area is the recent mechanisation of *orpaillage* in the last four to six years, which has intensified the pace of gold extraction. In the four main sites, shafts can reach as deep as 100 meters while the water table is reached after around 50m, and some machine are used to pull the water out of the shafts in order to be able to dig further down. These machines cost a significant amount of money, around CFA 1 million, so very few people are able to afford them. Yet they are widely used and indeed very valuable in Bakou because gold veins are deep and these machines allow miners to dig below the water table. There are only a couple of these machines in the area, and shafts owners from Bakou own them. Shaft supervisors understand that without these machines they would not be able to undertake the work that they do, and they accept the authority of shaft owners as a result (shaft supervisor, Bakou, interview on 02.08.2011).

So far this section has shown that a number of relations of recognition ‘from below’ explain the way shaft owners managed to claim and maintain authority over the production of gold resources. I showed that there are historical underpinnings to those claims whereby certain shafts supervisors are more prominent than others, through their expertise as ex-CBMP buyers and members of landholding families. These claims have materialised in certain rents and have been maintained through a moral economy of *orpaillage*. These claims have produced an unequal local *orpaillage* economy, and for shaft owners to be able to maintain their claims, they rely on the ability of less prominent shaft supervisors to entertain durable working relations with their diggers. This ‘moral economical’ argument is an important aspect of the conditions under which shaft supervisors are able to maintain authority under conditions where statutory regulation is absent. At the same time, this regulatory vacuum is not just an opportunity, it is also a threat: *orpaillage* is effectively an illegal activity, and while state-sanctioned regulation is absent in Séguénéga, this does not mean that statutory institutions are absent altogether. In order to understand how shaft owners are able to maintain their claims, we must examine the relation between these

institutions of power and the lineage holders that effectively grant authority to shaft owners.

One blind eye: Lineage holders and the state

The police

While *orpaillage* is illegal, it would be very difficult to prevent it from happening seeing the number of people involved in the activity, and as the mayor put it, '*you cannot put a policeman behind every shaft*' (mayor, Séguénéga, interview on 14.12.2012). Yet, the activity does require the intervention of the police from time to time.

Since the CBMP has disappeared, *orpaillage* is technically illegal. As seen above, this has not prevented shaft owners from emerging as powerful institutions of power over gold production. However this also raises the question of how their authority is recognised by state institutions. At the time of the CBMP, its agents assumed responsibility over issues related to security in collaboration with the local police (Werthmann 2003). A certain percentage of revenues raised by the CBMP agent were transferred to the police authorities. The latter exercised some degree of authority over security issues (first CBMP Director, Ouagadougou, interview on 05.12.2012). In places where small-scale mining operates under an AAM concession, the license holder is able to mobilise private or public security forces to ensure security (Small-scale mining Director, Ministry of Mining, Ouagadougou, interview on 30.03.2012).

The first domain where the police intervene is related to security of working arrangements in the mines. At the time of the CBMP, its agent used to oversee these arrangements, but since its disappearance the issue is not left in the hands of shaft supervisors alone. Every year at the approach of the rainy season, police authorities receive instructions to communicate and enforce the closing of shafts and municipal authorities are expected to assist in the task of disseminating this instruction. Of course this measure cannot be legislated since *orpaillage* is illegal, however they do receive instructions to warn shaft owners. Yet, the police rarely engage in this domain:

'It is the mafia over there, I myself don't like to go there, when the miners see somebody with a uniform they think it is because they are going to evict them or extract money from them, I only go there when there is an accident, or to tell them to stop working during the rainy season.' (Head of local police, Séguénéga, interview on 26.07.2011). In this sense, the police turn a blind eye and as such, recognise the claims that have been made by lineage holders in Bakou over the shafts. This allows shaft owners to oversee working arrangements and by implication their authority does not become contested.

A second domain that requires police intervention is conflicts and theft. In Bakou, the police are rarely seen on site. However they are sometimes mobilised and in these cases they intervene. For example in Bakou one of them recalled that one day *'There were two guys, not from here, who left their motorcycle hidden in a shed and kept going round suspiciously at the market, so we decided to gather secretly and watch them. At the end of the day we called the police in Séguénéga who came to arrest them and we were right because the motorcycles they had hidden were stolen ones'* (gold digger, Bakou, interview on 22.10.2011). Therefore while the police turns a blind eye and recognise shaft owners as such, there are instances when shaft owners require more input from the police, and in these instances, the fact that their authority of shaft owners is recognised by the police effectively allows them to continue exercising public authority over the production of gold in Bakou. In these instances, certain opaque arrangements have evolved between the police and shaft owners, but these are elaborated in Chapter Seven because they relate more specifically to the relations between overlapping shaft owners and municipal councillors in the field of decentralisation.

The préfet

The passive recognition of the police is only one aspect of the relation between statutory institutions of power and lineage holders. As mentioned earlier, *orpaillage* has been undertaken for over 25 years. Shaft owners have been able to lay claims upon shafts through their mutual recognition with the CBMP, and to maintain them through the *orpaillage* work ethics, but these claims have been contested over the

years. Interestingly though, when the CBMP left, the contestation of claims was arbitrated by a state-sanctioned institution of power, namely, the *préfet*.

One important element that helps understand the way shafts can and cannot be claimed relates to geology. The way the gold lays underground determines the possibility of enclosure. One well-travelled *orpaillage* entrepreneur explains that: “*there is a difference in geology between villages. In Tiba [another of the four oldest mining villages in Séguénéga] it is not possible to settle down in one place because the gold is on the surface- in Bakou on the other hand the gold is deeper but not too deep that they cant dig*” (gold digger, Tiba, interview on 25.07.2011). In Bakou gold is found in several horizontal layers, or veins that go deep underground, which means that the shafts have a long life span and so do the claims laid on them. In other places characterised by one or two veins that are closer to the surface, the shafts are less long-lived and are quickly abandoned. So one element of the durability of claims to shafts and of the authority of shaft supervisors is strongly related to geology.

On the other hand, the depth of a gold vein does not prevent these claims from being contested. Indeed one must be able to ‘read’ the underground where all sorts of rules and cunning strategies are applied by diggers to get the most out of shafts. For example one shaft supervisor once recounted to me his misadventures in a mining camp where the supervisor from the neighbouring shaft had discovered a vein going diagonally and told his diggers to work sideways, rather than downwards so to follow the vein and reap most benefits from the underground. At some point however the two teams of diggers finally met underground and did not know which supervisor to give the bags to (shaft supervisor, Bakou, interview on 02.08.2011). In Bakou also, a similar conflict emerged at one time and opposed shafts owners from the same family lineage over two different lines. One of them started digging diagonally from his shaft to that of his rival and started pulling the rocks collected there from his own shaft. His opponent of course contested this cunning move. As they were both members of the same lineage, it was difficult for the lineage holders to make a ruling. The matter was taken to the *préfet* at the time. He ruled in favour of the first man by virtue of the fact that he could ‘read’ the underground, which gave him the right to claim gold out of

that shaft, and this has not been contested ever since (Local community relations officer, Séguénéga, Orezone, interview on 06.12.2011).

As such, while the CBMP has contributed to the recognition of shaft owners' authority over gold resources in Séguénéga, the fact that they are all sons of the area is also problematic. In this case, disputes emerge between sons of the area, and in such cases, the maintenance of authority over shafts is settled by overlapping government-sanctioned institutions like the *préfet*.

Mining investors and the government in Séguénéga

Recognition by OREZONE

As mentioned above, all shafts owners in Bakou are sons of the village, except from one man who is from Séguénéga. Despite the fact that he is not a son of Bakou, this man managed to lay and maintain authority over a 'line' of shafts in Bakou. He was a CBMP local buyer at the time the CBMP existed, but this only partly explains how he managed to acquire a claim when the CBMP left and whereas he is not a son of Bakou. This was explained to me as a result of his employment as a 'guide' for the mineral research company who used to have an exploration permit in the 1990s:

'He stroke an agreement with Madi and took a line in Bakou, after working with the white people when they came. At that time he stepped forward to help them go around the sites and he must have had a look at their papers and saw that one site on top of the hill in Bakou had a lot of gold, and that it was a little deep so they had to dig up this site. After that he went to ask the old guys in Bakou and got a place. That's quite recent 2007, before that he was washing gold like the women!' (informal discussion after a meeting between OREZONE and shaft owners, participant observation on 06.12.2011).

Today, this man is able to claim rent on this line because he was among the first to have discovered the gold there. The man himself explains that he *'was tipped off about where the gold was while working for the foreigners'* (shaft supervisor, Bakou, interview on 28.04.2012). This man is currently doing very well: in addition to

receiving rent from the shaft supervisors working on 'his line' he is also the *coordinateur départemental*, or local representative for the powerful private gold counter SOMIKA. Thus here again we see that the links between legal and illegal activities are not all that rigid. More importantly here is that this shaft owner is the only one who is not from Bakou and to whom this rent must be paid. In this sense 'being a son of the area' is 'not enough' to become a shaft owner and laying a claim on them.

The relation of recognition between lineage holders and OREZONE helps explain how this man became able to lay claims upon a line of shafts in Bakou, but it also explains how he became able to maintain his claim. Indeed, this man continues to entertain linkages with OREZONE and has managed to maintain his authority over gold production as such. At the time of fieldwork, one conflict emerged between OREZONE and shaft owners in Bakou. The conflict pertained to a cement bearing that had been dug and built by the company to carry out exploration work, and which had been destroyed by the diggers hired by shaft owners.¹⁰³

The drillings undertaken by OREZONE have mostly concentrated on areas that do not conflict with gold digging activities when this was possible, so to prevent conflicts, but in some cases, it was impossible to drill elsewhere than very near the shafts. Several cement bearings were placed at the locations of drilling near the shafts, but the diggers claimed they unintentionally destroyed the bearings while using dynamite. The event led to the arrival of a 'community relations officer' from the Capital to meet with the shaft owners, to try and find a solution to the problem. A couple of meetings were organised at OREZONE local headquarters situated on the road between Bakou and Séguénéga. A private interview with the national community relations officer prior to and after the meeting informed me that the ulterior aim for the meeting was to try to find a way to announce to shaft owners that their shafts would have to be closed because OREZONE needed to undertake further drillings very close to them. Nevertheless the meeting was framed around the issue of the cement bearing.

¹⁰³ Gold digging is tolerated by the Investor on its exploration permit which is justified as a 'more efficient way to access the exploration sites and get work done' than if they tried to forbid artisanal activities altogether, which would bring about significant opposition and would be impossible to enforce as a result (vice-president, OREZONE, Séguénéga, interview on 27.10.2011).

Focusing the meeting on the responsibility of the gold-diggers towards the destruction of the OREZONE property aimed to make it easier to convince shaft owners to abandon their shafts. The meeting revolved mainly around discussions about responsibility over fixing the bearing, where the responsibility of shaft owners was emphasised, and the idea that a compensation for OREZONE must be paid. Interviews with some of the shaft owners after the meeting, revealed that the latter were well-aware of the strategy. In this case, it was convenient to have a shaft owner who already had good working relations with OREZONE operate as an intermediary. He was approached, along with municipal authorities to negotiate a deal with shaft owners (general secretary, Séguénéga, interview on 07.12.2012), and it was agreed that shaft owners should make a contribution of CFA 500,000 (500 GBP) to replace the broken cement bearing:

"Well, OREZONE came to tell us [shaft owners] that drilling this bearing costs 8 million CFA, so they asked us what we intend to do about the damage [...] we said that since we are not as strong [rich] they could maybe go drill somewhere else, but they refused, then the mayor told us that to show good will, to show that we realised our faults, we should give something in exchange.

Shaft owner, Bakou, interview on 14.05.2012

This contribution was also a way for shaft owners to show good will, and encourage OREZONE to leave their shafts alone, which was the case, though for a different reason.¹⁰⁴ The CFA 500,000 were paid by the shaft owners and entrusted with the shaft owner who had previously worked with OREZONE (shaft owner, Séguénéga, interview on 29.04.2012). A few months later, OREZONE had left the area, and the CFA 500,000 had not been claimed. This demonstrates that what was at stake for the Investor was less material than symbolic; their request towards the shaft owners served to mark their authority over them. At the same time what is interesting here is that this also reinforced the authority of the shaft owner in Bakou who is not a son of the area. While lineage holders have progressively laid further claims of authority

¹⁰⁴ Following promising drilling work, and following the financial crisis, OREZONE was not able to sustain its permit in Séguénéga. However it was able to sell it to another company, which came to apply for an exploitation permit. The issue is dwelled upon in greater detail in Chapter Seven in relation to the politics of autonomy.

over shafts, through taxation, the fact that this man had access to relations with the investor allowed him to reinforce his claim vis-à-vis lineage holders.

SOMIKA and OREZONE

As is becoming clear, the area is well-endowed with gold and it is surprising then that no AAM license has been claimed in the area. An interesting question is to try and understand why the shaft owners did not set up an AAM themselves. While most of them speak, read and write little French, the administrative language, they are well-connected individuals, and would the license be helpful, it would not be unlikely for them to apply for an AAM and set up a *comptoiré* by themselves. For example, Adama Kindo, the director of SOMIKA originates from a village only a few km away and became involved in mining in the same way as the shaft owners in Bakou did, that is, by working for the CBMP agent as a local gold buyer. In fact, many of them suggest that he became so rich by doing a bad job for the CBMP, though, some in the area recall that *'he used to be the one smuggling the most'* (ex-CBMP buyer, Séguénéga, interview on 29.04.2012).

It took some time to query what shaft owners thought about the possibility to acquire an AAM license because shaft supervisors refer to these as a *'comptoiré'* and it was not immediately apparent to me that a *comptoiré* and an AAM were the same thing. Some of the young shaft supervisors in Bakou revealed that they were unaware of the administrative procedure involved in applying for an AAM (CVD representatives, Bakou, group interview on 11.11.2011). On the other hand, shaft owners with more knowledge and experience explained that they had looked into it but that an AAM would not be to their advantage in Bakou: *'the problem is that if you do that you wont get along with the people; you will be looking for benefits for yourself and you might not get along with other people, also if you succeed, you are here, at home, and if you get something, there are jealousies...'* (shaft owner, Bakou, interview on 06.05.2012).

The point here is that the 'moral economy' of *orpaillage* is not only maintained through internal working arrangements but is also held tight against external interests. Supervisors are not willing to 'legalise' their claims to resources because they perceive this would undermine their ability to 'get along with other people' and thereby compromise their effective control over the shafts. What is being emphasised

here is not so much the fact that AAM legal provisions are maladjusted to *orpaillage* work conditions, since this has already been emphasised in Chapter Five. Rather, for shaft owners, not to apply for an AAM plays in their favour, as they are able to retain their regulatory autonomy.

At the same time, it is surprising that no AAM license holders from outside the area would have applied for it in Bakou given how well-endowed with gold the area is. As mentioned before, the area is covered by an exploration license held by OREZONE, but the law does not preclude the acquisition of an AAM. As Luning (2008, 2012) shows in some cases, acquiring an AAM can work to the advantage of foreign mining companies that have little understanding of local contexts and find it hard to enforce their claims. In the case she presents, she shows that a foreign mining company allowed an AAM license on its own exploration license as a way to control or contain *orpaillage* activities. The AAM license holder was given the right to have a license over the area covered by the exploration permit, but only in certain areas that had proven to be worse endowed with gold. As such, the foreign mining company did not need to try and evict the miners altogether and relegated the responsibility to control *orpaillage* to the AAM license holder, while the latter was able to establish a monopoly over the extraction of gold in that area. The ways in which this was enforced is not clear in Luning's work, though AAM license holders are allowed to mobilise private and public security forces on their license.

In Séguénéga, OREZONE did not find this necessary: *'we have a few exploration licenses, in the south of the country it is difficult to control orpaillage but we have an interlocutor on the ground that oversees artisanal mining [albeit, an AAM]. Here we did not find it necessary, it was relatively easy to work because the shaft owners are well-organise, and the moosé are generally more accommodating anyway'* (Mining engineer, OREZONE, Séguénéga, interview on 27.10.2011)

Shaft owners acknowledge that the lack of an AAM is a good thing (shaft owner, Bakou, interview on 14.12.2012), but explanations as for why no AAM licenses have been acquired in the area are vague. Several of them recalled that a representative from the gold counter SOMIKA visited the area and 'tried to set up a *comptoiré*'

(shaft owner, Bakou, interview on 06.05.2012).¹⁰⁵ Some claimed that SOMIKA had approached residents in Bakou and in a neighbouring village but did not come to an agreement with them. One other respondent would not go further than to say that the residents 'did not accept' (shaft owner, Bakou, interview on 01.05.2012), while another one claimed that SOMIKA came but imposed unacceptable rules which led residents to burn SOMIKA's installations (shaft supervisor, Séguénéga, interview on 14.12.2012). This is not unusual for an AAM holder, a *comptoiré* as they are known in mooré, to be assailed by indignant *orpaillage* miners since the prices they practice are so disadvantageous to them. Lastly, other respondents acknowledged that it has '*probably something to do with OREZONE*' (Shaft owner, Bakou, interview on 29.04.2012). As such the relation of recognition between OREZONE and SOMIKA allowed shaft owners to continue to exercise authority over the production of gold in Bakou and neighbouring villages.

At the same time the presence of OREZONE also constitutes a threat to shaft owners, and the latter are well aware of this. At the time of fieldwork, the company had envisaged to apply for an exploitation license and build an open pit mine in 2013. For several reasons, this was not possible, but their plans was common knowledge in the area, and shaft owners know fine well that when a large-scale mine starts being built, they will loose the basis of their livelihoods. The mine holds some job prospect for some of them, or rather for their children, but experiences about relations between large-scale mines and *orpaillage* in the rest of the country are not encouraging. As such while shaft owners in Bakou generally tolerate OREZONE drilling work, they are also well aware that 'the state has sold the land to the Investor' and that, one day may come soon, when they will have to go. When asked whether in the long run they would rather have to deal with a *comptoiré* or with OREZONE, they would rather have to deal with the former '*because the comptoiré is just people buying gold, whereas OREZONE takes everything, we don't know where and when they might start digging, maybe they will dig close to our houses and in that case what are we going to do, where are we going to live?!*' (shaft owner, Bakou, interview on 14.05.2012).

¹⁰⁵ I was not able to establish a date on this event, and there may be more to the relations between OREZONE and SOMIKA than is recounted here because I did not have the possibility to conduct further interview on this with OREZONE.

Here we might have reached the limits to recognition, and the relevance of the state. When claimants compete over a single piece of resource, as a way to assert authority, relations of recognition work to the advantage of certain institutions rather than others. The question of which institutions over others are empowered is beyond the scope of this study, but it is significant to point out that the analytic of recognition may help shed light on this question, if pushed further. What is within the scope of this study is the concern over the durability of twilight institutions. It should be noted that relations of recognition both mediate the formation of an authority claim, but they also limit them. For authority to be maintained, it always requires *further* recognition. This point is significant because it sets out the context in which overlapping institutions of power relate in the field of decentralisation, and about the kind of idea that emerges about the state as a result of that relation, which is examined in Chapter Seven.

Shaft owners: Autonomy but fragile authority

The significance of relations of recognition in producing public authority over the production of gold is brought to light in this section. While shaft owners operate in an apparent government vacuum, a multitude of government and non-government sanctioned institutions overlap in Séguénéga, and particularly in Bakou. The way these institutions overlap and compete helps understand the conditions under which shaft owners managed to claim and maintain claims over shafts in Bakou.

This state of affair resonates that of other places where government-sanctioned frameworks are equally absent over small-scale mining. Ethnographic work in the Sahel has generally focused on those relations of recognition ‘from below’. It demonstrates the role of principles underlying the ‘moral economy’ of risk and benefit sharing in *orpaillage* that sets small-scale mining apart while keeping it together (Werthmann 2010, Grätz 2009). At the same time here we see that relations of recognition from below are not quite sufficient to understand how these authorities are able to emerge and become durable over time in a context where government-sanctioned regulation over small-scale mining is absent, but where government-sanctioned authorities are nonetheless present (e.g. police, *préfet*). The significance of the relations examined above resonates with the work of Luning (2008; 2012) that

demonstrates the role of foreign investors in granting authority to neo-customary chiefs over the production of gold resources when choosing them as interlocutors with the small-scale miners. This echoes the analysis presented here whereby the only shaft owner not originating from Bakou managed to press a claim over shafts after being hired as a ‘local guide’ for the foreign exploration company that has operated in Séguénéga for a number of years now. In this sense relations of recognition are significant in producing durable authority beyond the mines of Bakou.

At the same time, an analysis of relations of recognition also sheds light on the limits of twilight institutions. While shaft owners are able to exercise public authority under conditions of absent statutory regulation, the relation that the state entertains with mining investors constitute a limit to the durability of these institutions of power. This is significant because in the next Chapter I show that this autonomy becomes threatened when municipal authorities claim taxes over the production of gold resources. However before turning to this, below I analyse vertical relations of recognition in the context of woodfuel production in Séguénéga, which help understand how forms of institutional power emerges and endures under conditions of weak states.

Twilight institutions among the trees of Séguénéga

Much like gold production, woodfuel is collected in Séguénéga in a context where government sanction over woodfuel is relatively absent. Unlike gold, where the CBMP disappeared, state agents in Burkina continue to exercise authority over national space, albeit, with varying degrees of enforcement capacity. As shown in Chapter Five, those operating under FUM concessions generally enjoy a lesser degree of autonomy than those operating outside them. In Séguénéga, there is no FMU concession and woodcutters are therefore relatively autonomous, but in order to collect woodfuel they must acquire an authorisation with the state agent. The latter however must cover two *départements*, Séguénéga and Kossouka, an area roughly amounting to 100,000ha. This stands at the high-end of the average staff/spatial extent of jurisdiction ratio. However this ratio is not an unusual one, as we have seen in the previous Chapter. In this context, an intermediary institution has emerged, which I

call *tiis nanamse*. They differ from shaft owners in many ways, but one commonality is that they also operate at the twilight. They are able to yield public authority over the production of woodfuel while not being recognised *de jure*. In this Chapter I analyse the relations of recognition that help understand the conditions under which *tiis nanamse* managed to lay claims of authority over the production of woodfuel in Séguénéga and the extent to which they are able to exercise these claims.

Tiis nanamse differ from shaft owners in the sense that they are not resource claimants themselves. Shaft owners directly benefit from the production of gold resources as well as exercising public authority over them, but *tiis nanamse* simply exercise some degree of authority over forest resources, and by implication, over woodcutters too, but they are not necessarily woodcutters themselves. The woodfuel economy is much less significant than that of gold in Séguénéga, and therefore the number of overlapping institutions is lesser too; for example there is no resource claimants competing for the production of woodfuel in the same way as there is for the production of gold in Séguénéga, as is the case for SOMIKA and OREZONE. Finally woodfuel production is not an illegal activity, unlike *orpaillage*, and in this sense the police need not be involved. Despite this, like shaft owners, *tiis nanamse* are a significant interlocutor between state-sanctioned institutions of power and resource producers, and particularly, as we will see in the next Chapter, they are significant interlocutors to municipal authorities. In order to understand how they relate however we must first pay attention to the particular quality that defines these institutions. Like shaft owners, below I show that *tiis nanamse* operate at the twilight in the sense that they have a certain ‘state-like quality’ but as their authority emerges out of the relations between competing and overlapping institutions of power, *tiis nanamse* are also vulnerable to being contested themselves. In order to understand how *tiis nanamse* have become able to lay and sustain claims of authority over woodfuel in a context of partial government, we must begin our analysis in the relation of recognition between the forest agent and woodcutters.

Impractical law: state forest agent and woodcutters

There are two elements of legislation that pertain to the regulation of woodfuel. The first is an annual fee that both woodfuel retailers and wholesale merchants must

acquire in exchange of a professional card (*agrément d'exploitation et de commercialisation forestière*). The fees ought to be fixed by municipalities and therefore they can vary but it is advised to charge retailers CFA 6.600 (GBP 8) and merchants CFA 12,500 (GBP 15) (CILSS 2007: 20). These cards are rarely purchased however, and they are charged by local foresters rather than by the municipality (Sawadogo and Yoni 2009: 32). In Séguénéga the conditions for purchasing such cards have been posted by the forest agent on the wall inside his small rudimentary and electricity-less office. They are delivered against a yearly fee of CFA 7,000 (GBP 8) for retailers and CFA 10,000 (GBP 12) for merchants. However in practice only a handful of woodfuel merchants purchased these cards because the legislation is not convenient.

One reason for this is that in the area, the production and the commercialisation of woodfuel is rarely undertaken as a full-time activity. The forest agent explained that *'It is already quite difficult for people here [i.e. financially]. For example, imagine an old guy who sells firewood on the side, he is going to need a professional card but where is he going to find CFA 7,000 to start with? Anyway they don't really commercialise the wood here, it is only very small commerce'* (forest agent, Séguénéga, interview on 04.05.2012). In other parts of the country that are closer to urban centres and have denser resources, woodfuel extraction is undertaken by individuals or cooperatives – as is the case of woodcutters cooperatives under FMU concessions – who are involved on a full-time basis. In Séguénéga, woodfuel production is less intensive: Deadwood is collected far from inhabited areas and (over-)loaded on donkey-drawn carts. The carts are then driven to Séguénéga where woodfuel is generally sold at a 'usual spot' and in small bundles of firewood, by either the woodcutter her/himself, or by a retailer having bought the cartload. This means that woodcutter, wholesale merchant and retailer are often a single person or group of persons, and they rarely purchase professional cards.

Despite this, the forest agent in Séguénéga was eager to regularise woodfuel extraction in his jurisdiction. He campaigned around villages asking woodcutters to organise themselves in groups: *'I asked people to give me a list of names, but I can't go round chasing them. In Sittigo the guy gave me a list of names, but then I had*

people come round here and complain that their name was on the list whereas somebody else's was not' (forest agent, Séguénéga, interview on 04.05.2012). Woodcutters however were not used to following this rule and were not eager to have their names written down on a list that would make them liable to pay a fee they had never been charged before. The forest agent confessed that despite his efforts only a handful of groups or individuals had purchased professional cards in his jurisdiction this year. This does not however mean that woodcutters disregarded the law altogether.

The second legal requirement for the collection and commercialisation of woodfuel is the payment of two taxes, which together stand by way of a woodcutting permit. The woodfuel is either strapped to bicycles or mounted on carts (see photos), but only the latter is liable to pay these taxes. In the *forêts protégées* they only pertain woodfuel that is commercialised; woodfuel gathered for subsistence is not liable to the tax. The first one is a woodcutting permit (*'permis de coupe'*).¹⁰⁶ It amounts to CFA 350 (GBP 0.50) for each cubic meter (*'stère'*), but in practice it is charged CFA 450 because each cartload contains on average 1 and ½ cubic meter. This is the case in Séguénéga but is also a common practice throughout Burkina Faso (CILSS 2007, 22). The second tax is a circulation permit (*'permis de circulation'*) for each wood collection trip that costs another CFA 300. This means that those collecting woodfuel must pay a total of CFA 750 (GBP 1) for each cartload of woodfuel collected and sold. Each cart contains a woodfuel load that is generally sold around CFA 3,000 (GBP 3.50) to retailers whom in turn sell them in small bundles of CFA 500 to 1,000 in town (woodcutter, Sima, interview on 05.11.2011).¹⁰⁷ In most cases the merchant is also the woodcutter and

¹⁰⁶ The name of this permit is of interest: according to the forest agent, woodfuel only pertains deadwood. Greenwood falls under a different legislation, that which pertains timber extraction. However the name of this permit suggests that woodfuel is expected to be felled, and this indicates that these permits are really tailored for production in FMU woodfuel concessions where woodfuel is indeed produced through a tree felling rotation system of 1 woodplot every 15 years. This is simply an additional indication of the fact woodfuel regulation was not elaborated in relation to contexts that are not under FUM management and adds evidence to the fact that the discrepancy between law and practice is not simply a factor of legal deviation, but also one of inconvenience and lack of pragmatism in legislation.

¹⁰⁷ This piece of information was also confirmed with two further interviews (CVD, Sima, interview on 05.11.2011; Forest agent Séguénéga, interview on 04.05.2012). It was sought with ordinary residents and authorities rather than woodcutters because I expected the latter might be inclined to either inflate or down play the prices they get for a cartload. Ordinary residents on the other hand did not have any reason to tweak their answer about the price and I considered them reliable as a result. There was no need to undertake a large survey in the interest of this specific study and while

there is therefore a profit of at least CFA 2,250 (GBP 2.80) to be made. The forest agent claims that roughly a 100 permits are delivered each month, which suggests that woodcutters in Séguénéga respect this regulation fairly well, which makes sense in a town of 6,000 people where it would be easy to get caught.

On the other hand, woodfuel is also collected and sold in places far from the forest agent's office in Séguénéga. From these places it is not practical to travel just to pick up a permit – especially if one is unlikely to get caught – and several woodcutters residing in villages few km away from Séguénéga admitted to selling woodfuel without any sort of official document. One of them complained: *'well, what am I to do? Travel 20km to Séguénéga on my bike there and back while the village where I sell wood is only 5km away?!'* (woodcutter, Bassanga, interview on 21.02.2012). In other cases it may be more convenient for woodcutters residing in one jurisdiction to purchase a permit in another jurisdiction. Some woodcutters from Doussaré for example purchase their permits in Séguénéga while the village is technically part of the department of Ouindigi overseen by a different forest agent. One reason is that Doussaré is 20km away from the forest agent's office in Ouindigi, whereas a number of people from Doussaré work in Séguénéga and are able to pick up the permits for them (woodcutter, Doussaré, interview on 04.04.2012). It is not always practical to purchase a permit also because the forest agent is not always there at his office: *'it's not easy to catch the forest agent. Twice I have gone around his office in the last month, and twice I missed him'* (woodcutter, Sima, interview on 17.10.2011). In these cases, as with the lack of purchase of professional cards, the circumvention of law by woodcutters is not only case of outright lawless inclination as the fact that regulation is simply inconvenient.

At the same time, it is illegal to transport and to sell woodfuel without permits, or to be caught with a permit from the wrong jurisdiction and it is the forest agent's duty to make sure that this does not happen. In these cases, tensions often arise between the forest agent and woodcutters. One woman originating from Doussaré recounted how the *'forest agent traumatised people over there in the past'* (Séguénéga, resident, Séguénéga, interview on 01.11.2011). Sentiments of distrust and fear towards the

only three informants were interviewed, their answers were consistent and considered to provide a reliable estimate for the price of cartloads.

forest agent are common in Séguénéga and throughout Burkina (see Hagberg 2001). One elderly woman recalls that:

'At the time of the Révolution [1983-1987] the forest agent had just arrived in Séguénéga. At that time he did not pick on people, but today, wai, it's not easy! My son here got picked up just the other day: CFA 25,000!! [embarrassed chuckle] he had the [CFA 750] ticket but he left it with somebody who was walking behind. He was intercepted by the forest agent and explained to him that the permit was with an acolyte who was walking behind but the forest agent did not want to hear a thing, and he confiscated his national ID. Now he has to pay 25,000 to be given his ID back. Imagine the amount of wood he will have to sell to do that!' (elder woman, Sima, interview on 08.05.2012).

On the other hand, forest agents do not always feel comfortable with their policing role. The forest agent in Séguénéga complained to me:

People don't realise, if I could get rid of these permits I really would sometimes. You know it puts us [forest agents] in difficult situation; only the other day I had to grab the collar of some guy who came to the office in with his wife. He got caught without a permit but he refused to pay the fine so he told his wife to pick up her stuff and leave and I said that it wasn't going to be like that, you know what men are like when their woman is there, I had to call the police. You know we just want to stop having this role of repression, of police; we just want to do our technical job and that's it!

(Forest agent, Séguénéga, interview on 16.04.2012)

What is to be taken away here is that the regulation pertaining woodfuel as well as the lack of resources at the disposal of foresters is making the law difficult to enforce. Impractical laws and poor enforceability generate tensions between forest agents and woodfuel collectors; at the same time poor law enforceability is not only a problem for the forest agent, it is also one for forest users who see their resources declining.

In the following section I examine how resource users themselves have attempted to take the matter of erratic woodcutting in their own hands and how specific individuals

have emerged as ‘bush experts’ with certain legitimate authority over the bush. In the context of impractical laws described above, and despite the general distrust towards the forester, certain amount of cooperation and compromises are often struck between these individuals and the foresters pertaining the regulation of woodfuel extraction and commercialisation. Before turning to these compromises, I examine local perceptions of tree decline that help contextualise why forest users seek to ally with the forester rather than systematically evade him.

‘When the wood became money’: environmental change and authority

Elder: *Now there is a problem of rain, it is not enough, whereas that’s what we eat on, but another problem really is that they [people in general] don’t listen to elders. In the old days you couldn’t cut the trees randomly, there were traditional rules*

Interviewer: *But why do people not apply the old rules then? Why do people cut trees randomly now?*

Elder: *Just because now wood has become money (in mooré: raada leba ligdi). People come in and cut the wood, people don’t want to work, they sell it as woodfuel, they earn 1000F and they just sit and eat the money!*

Elder, Sima, interview on 21.04.2012

It is often assumed that local resource users in developing societies are too poor and too ignorant to realise the consequences of their resource use practices. Clearly, the view expressed by the elder above suggests otherwise. There are two aspects worth developing from this extract about local perceptions of environmental change: the first is related to the decline of traditional rules and customs (‘*roogo miki*’ in mooré) related to resource use, and the second aspect is related to the time ‘when wood became money’ both of which came back repeatedly in narrative of environmental degradation and specifically when asked whether the woodfuel permit helped improve or degrade the bush.

It is not a commonly held view that erratic woodcutting is a function of declining authority of traditional rulers and traditional rules, but it has been mentioned elsewhere (Hagberg 1998, Boffa 1999, Breusers 2001, Langewiesche 2006). While it

is beyond the scope of this work to have documented them exhaustively, there are a number of traditional rules that have stopped being respected. It is common for villages to have kept sacred woods over the years where a certain number of restrictions apply to resource use, like tree pruning and cutting. One common explanation brought forward is the fact that people have converted to Islam. When I was enquiring about the history of the settlement of Bakou, I was told that it would be difficult to talk to the village chief about this because *'it would involve him talking about customs but he has now converted to Islam so he cannot talk about traditional rules anymore* (resident, Bakou, interview on 11.12.2012). In the village of Sima, the land priest, the authority over land, brought forward another explanation:

Land priest: *Religion made a difference, now we cannot always make sacrifices to give the village health and food.*

Interviewer: *So how do they ensure that the village gets food and health if you cannot do sacrifices anymore?*

Land priest: *There are sacred woods (ziikidse, sg. Ziikidga). These are still respected. I'll give you an example, 6 days ago a man from Bakou took wood from the sacred wood and he got caught and brought to the forest agent.*

Interviewer: *Who caught him?*

Land priest: *No one caught him. He just couldn't sleep because of what he did and came to them. This still works, but regarding the sacrifices, we do not get along with one another (wumtaaba) anymore'.*

Land priest, Sima, interview on 11.12.2011

These show that there are a number of factors that have undermined the authority of traditional leaders over the bush; At the same time, the law over the bush is perceived to have undermined traditional rules and authorities; residents explain this in those terms:

Interviewer: *What were the old rules that you followed in the bush?*

Respondent 1: *Well now we don't have rules anymore, we used to have customs but the law of the white man came and now we have no control over the bush*

Respondent 2: *In the old days it was impossible to pick unripe fruits from a tree. People would nag you; you would even pay a fine.*

Respondent 3: *In these days there was no money, but people would bring chickens, cows, usually they would turn themselves up and if they didn't they would die!*¹⁰⁸

Bush experts, Sittigo, group interview on 09.05.2012

These rules vary from place to place, and they are clearly not applied anymore. Interesting, however, is the common belief that ill fortune would fall upon one hurting the bush or circumventing these rules. The point is that these rules have become undermined since the government law applies to the bush.

The second aspect brought up in the quote at the beginning of this section is related to the fact that people stopped applying traditional rules because 'wood became money'. While it did not appear clearly to me at the time, this formulation struck me later as unusual and upon reflection, as rather ambiguous. On the one hand, it clearly relates to the increase in woodfuel commercialisation and the penetration of extraction deeper in rural areas. Doussaré is a particularly isolated village for example and one characteristic is that it has a wide and thick sacred wood within the village and surrounding the village. Residents however explain that it is getting less and less dense: *'before people did not sell firewood so much, but now everyday you see carts loaded with wood coming out of our bush. It is people from the neighbouring village. They have depleted their bush, and now they come get ours'* (Doussaré resident, Doussaré, group interview of 04.04.2012). In this sense wood became money because one can make a buck out of woodfuel extraction.

On the other hand, this formulation took on a different meaning some time later during a courtesy visit to a schoolteacher friend in when I heard that *"it is true that there is a shortage of rain, but the woodcutting permit really does not help either!"* (Sima resident, Sima, interview on 15.04.2012). In this sense, the issue is not only that woodfuel exploitation has increased, but more specifically the fact that the law regimenting it does not work. This question was followed up in more formal group

¹⁰⁸ This does not mean that the thieves would get killed, but that by the fact of their wrong-doing, something as unfortunate as dying would happen to them,

interviews with local forest experts and elders in seven villages situated in the Northern part of the municipality where forest resources are particularly dense. In each case I received a negative answer to the question of whether the woodcutting permit was improving the bush. While some respondents explained that *'the forest agent is after the money'*, others were more sympathetic towards the forest agent explaining that *'he is there in his office, he protects the bush and that is good, but then one day somebody gets up and buys a woodcutting permit with him and comes here to devastate the bush'* (Mogom resident, Mogom, interview on 11.05.2012). In this sense, the issue at hand is not only a question of individual greed, from either woodcutters or foresters, but a question of authority:

This CFA 750 paper [woodcutting permit] is a white person's paper it became the paper of the government.¹⁰⁹ This means that the person who has the paper can do what he wants, and if we see somebody in the bush doing things against our rule, we cannot forbid them because he shows the paper. If there wasn't this paper, would it be possible for anybody to come and cut greenwood here?! If they cut greenwood they couldn't get out of the bush, we wouldn't let them but since they have the paper we can't stop them! (village chief, Sima, interview on 13.04.2012)

In another village the discussion was also not clear:

Respondent 1: *Now there is a government, and everything and everyone is the property of the government, which means the bush also is the property of the government.*

Village chief: *Basically this means they have given the authorisation for anyone to come in and cut trees in our bush!*

Respondent 2: *Well the woodcutting ticket would be useful if people respected it.*

Village chief (disagrees): *Why do you say that?! This paper is not arranging the bush, it has taken away our force (panga) and we cannot follow our rules (sari, commitment) any longer.*

¹⁰⁹ The government rule is often referred to as 'white person' government even though it refers to the Burkinabè government. Interestingly also, the term in mooré often used to refer to democracy is *'nasara naam'* which roughly translates as 'political power according to the white man'. So here the reference to whiteness does not refer so much to colonial times as to the fact that the current legislation feels foreign to people.

Municipal councilor: *What the chief means is that, the ticket could be a good thing, but the situation of before and now are not the same, so we cannot follow the customs anymore, but the paper also is not giving solutions.*

Bush experts, Sittigo, group interview on 09.05.2012

The point being made here is not that declining vegetation cover is caused by state-sanctioned legislation, nor is it that centralised forest legislation results in open access regime. What is interesting is that since woodfuel resources became centralised not only did 'wood become money', i.e. for the government, but when woodfuel regulation became centralised under statutory regulation, authority over trees and other resources found in the bush was appropriated and handed to the forest agent. Effectively, this meant that the authority of traditional authorities was cancelled out in the process.

There are of course other reasons for the decline of traditional authority as pointed out at the start of this section. However with regards to woodcutting specifically, the authority of the forest agent has come to topple that of traditional authorities, and in the context of poor enforceability described before, this is what is causing the bush to have become less dense than it used to, as is illustrated in the comment made by the elder quoted at the start of this section. In this sense what is at stake is to regain authority over the bush, and in the current centralised ownership context would involve cooperating with the forest agent.

These observations sharpen our understanding about the conditions under which institutions of power emerge and endure alongside state sanction. Specifically here the relation between customary institutions of power and the forest agent gives rise to intermediary actors who act as interlocutor between them. The previous section showed that one element of this inadequacy pertains the lack of resources and means at the disposal for the forest agent to enforce it. A second element brought up here is the declining ability of local residents to enforce surveillance over the bush and control woodcutting, which is ironically what the permit intends to do. In the following section I examine how within the gap between the vision and execution of

impractical laws, some compromise emerge out of the dilemma generated and while these compromises are difficult to enforce, they grant *durable* authority to specific individuals who emerge as 'bush experts'.

Striking deals: Customary authorities and the government

'You know, sometimes there are resource persons, they may not be the village chief, they may not be the CVD, but you have to go through them to get things done.'

Forest agent, Séguénéga, interview on 04.05.2012

The lack of enforceability is clearly a problem for the forest agent; however, it is also one for forest users who have noticed forest resources degrading over the years and who have lost the ability to control woodcutting. In many places, surveillance committees have been set up. Life histories were not systematically undertaken because the importance of these individuals only emerged during the analysis, once I left the field, but the data gathered during interviews in seven villages around Séguénéga enable me to establish that groups of individuals in the villages visited systematically emerged out of the relation of recognition between the state forest agent and customary authorities, as is the case in the village of Sittigo:

Interviewer: *Ok and did you do something yourself to arrange this situation?*

Village chief: *Yes because people became numerous and animals too, and we decided to plant trees so we took a place and decided to set up a committee*

Interviewer: *Who decided to set up this committee?*

Village chief: *It was us who set it up, that is we got tired of thieves (in mooré: tond yinse be ne wagda) and we organised ourselves into a committee (kogl weogo, meaning to watch over the bush) to watch over the thieves*

Interviewer: *Did you get help for that?*

Village chief: *Well our force (panga) is not as good as that of the forest agent so we asked for help*

Bush experts, Sittigo, group interview on 09.05.2012

Here I show that *tiis nanamse* are sometimes recognised as a village-level committee called '*kogl weogo*' meaning 'to watch over the bush', which grants them durable authority. Such a committee did not exist in every village visited, but when explaining that I wanted to conduct an interview about matters related to the bush, individuals were always clearly identified as respondents because they were 'bush experts'. They are often referred to as '*tiis nanamse*' ('*tiis naaba*', sg.), which means tree expert in mooré, but are also called by other names such as '*weogo neda*', or 'person of the bush'. They are not state-sanctioned, but they systematically emerged out of the relation between the state forest agent and customary authorities.

Of course the problem of *bush surveillance* is not new, and it has not escaped the attention of governmental authorities either. Over the years, several government programmes have attempted to address the issue by encouraging the formation of village-level surveillance committees. At the time of the 'three struggles' national environmental policy during the revolution, impressive efforts were deployed to train locally-based 'bush experts', also referred to as '*paysan forestier*' (Boffa 1999).¹¹⁰ This included extensive forestry training dispensed to chosen individuals in rural areas including techniques in tree pruning, effective tree-nursery and tree planting. In Northern Burkina, these trainings were given through a powerful peasant association called the *Groupe ment NAAM* led by a man originally from Ouahigouya, the provincial capital, and who supported indigenous and localised soil and water conservation initiatives from the 1960s (Tcha-Koura 1995, Ouédraogo 2002). A high-level ministry official remembers:

'Yes, in the old days we had this programme called 'paysan forestier', that was in the 1980's they were trained according to this thing called the GRAP whereby they were trained into forestry techniques [...] But we noticed that there were some issues inconvenient, for example sometimes the chosen person who was the intermediary between the local population and the state had gone in ivory coast without letting anyone know, in this case we decided to have a second one as well to make sure there was someone there, another inconvenient we realised is that they monopolised the

¹¹⁰ There is close to nothing about this in the literature. However reference to the '*paysan forestier*' came up several times in the data generated with resource users, and also with a high-level ministry of environment staff (see quote further down in this section). At the same time the fact that it was implemented by the *Groupe ment NAAM* in the area indicates that this training might not have been so significant in areas other than the Yatenga where the *Groupe ment NAAM* originated and were most active. It is important to mention here therefore that this may only apply to the region of Yatenga.

control over the forest, they personalised it. Now we are envisaging to choose structures that are representative of the whole of society, structures like the CVD, the CEDL, there are more durable, that's what we need to do.'

Ministry of Environment staff, Ouagadougou, interview on 11.04.2012

In Bakou the *tiis naaba* benefited from some amount of authority over resources under this programme, though less than he used to enjoy under the Revolution. He remembers that while he did not use to work for the CDRs, he happened to collaborate with them. He was given '*a hat and papers that allowed him to stop people in the bush*' (*tiis naaba*, Bakou, interview on 03.04.2012). He was not a CDR¹¹¹ and it is not clear what his role was, but he was chosen at the time because he came from the lineage of the *Buga*, which may be characterised as the equivalent for *Teonse* (hunter caste) of the 'authority over land and sacrifices' in the same way as the land priest in villages that have been colonised by Moosé conquerors (gold digger, Bakou, interview on 03.04.2012). This person was the one I was pointed to when I sought to ask questions about forest resources in Bakou, and interestingly, while the era of the *paysan forestier* died out after the Revolution, this person remains locally in charge of overseeing forest resources although he now has no government-sanctioned authority over resources.

Tiis nanamse do not necessarily originate from the time of the revolution, and they may have been picked up along externally funded participatory sustainable development projects. With the popularity of participatory approaches in the 1980s and 1990s, some of these individuals have become important intermediaries and coordinators between external interventions in the area of environmental management and their role as 'development brokers' solidified (Bierschenk, Chauveau, and Olivier de Sardan 2002).

However one element that is true in Bakou and other places where village level 'forest experts' were interviewed is the fact that they are generally family members of lineages that have authority over land. In Sima, the *tiis naaba* is a member of the family lineage who founded the village and who is the authority over the land

¹¹¹ *Comité de Défense de la Révolution*, a village-level committee that had been created to topple the authority of customary chiefs under the CNR rule (see Chapter Four).

allocation and disputes. When asked whether he participated in projects during the Revolution he explained: '*I did not undertake that training under the revolution because I was working on plantations in Ivory Coast at the time, but I became closely involved with matters of bush protection upon my return*' (*tiis naaba*, Sima, interview on 08.05.2012). The story goes that 17 years ago, he discovered that two caimans had been massacred at a small pond nearby. These caimans were sacred animals and this was therefore considered a grave matter. After he reported the matter to village elders, they decided that a closer watch should be initiated on the bush and designated Issa to be in charge. Since that time, he became referred to as the village *tiis naaba* (CVD representative, Sima, interview on 10.05.2012).

By virtue of their expertise, these individuals enjoy some degree of authority over the bush. For example in many villages, they have formed bush surveillance committees, '*kogl weogo*' that aim to oversee cattle theft. In some cases they also confiscate wood that they have caught from people extracting without a woodcutting license, although this is the duty of the forest agent.

In many cases, these *tiis nanamse* collaborate with the forest agent rather than compete with him. In the commune neighbouring that of Séguénéga for example, the forest agent had managed to obtain equipment and bikes for them to patrol with. In the domain of woodfuel, these individuals and committees are often involved in catching those who collect woodfuel or those cutting greenwood without a permit. Cutting greenwood is a common offence, though it is particularly damaging and offenders generally prune a few branches rather than entire trees. In these cases, the person caught either flees (as I once witnessed myself!) or may be confronted and brought to the forest agent. In case the forest agent catches them, the culprit usually has his hatchet taken away along with wood and must come and pay a fine of 5,000CFA to the forest agent office to retrieve it (forest agent, Séguénéga, interview on 04.05.2012).

What is significant here is that by way of the impracticality of state legal arrangements over the regulation of woodfuel, it is an imperative for state and customary authorities to collaborate, and *tiis nanamse* are emerging out of this

relation. At the same time, the extent to which this institution is durable is a question that must be addressed through another set of relations, which are illustrated below through an example of the exercise of *tiis nanamse* public authority in Sima.

The contours of the twilight: Tiis nanamse, woodcutters and the state in Sima

In this latter section I illustrate the contours of the public authority exercised by *tiis nanamse*. So far we have shown that *tiis nanamse* have emerged as a powerful and distinct institution of power over forest resources. They have become able to lay claims of authority over forest resources out of the problematic relation between the forest agent and woodcutters around the impracticality of statutory regulation over woodfuel, and their authority has been maintained through the relation between overlapping customary authorities and forest agent over forest resources. In this last section I develop one last aspect of that relation, which highlights the contours, or limits, of the twilight in the case of *tiis nanamse* in Sima. This last section does not aim so much at highlighting the kind of relation that constitute the limits of the durable authority of *tiis nanamse*, or rather the kinds of actors involved in producing that limit, but more importantly to highlight a quality of twilight institutions: they are fragile and in constant need for further recognition. I illustrate this through an example

In Burkina, a state programme called '*1 département, 1 forêt*' was initiated in 2003 to tackle the issue of poor surveillance and initiated the delimitation of local forests, called '*forêts départementales*' managed and patrolled by local committees, and 230 forests were created covering 98, 268ha throughout national space (Yanogo 2006). Séguénéga was among the circumscriptions that benefitted from this intervention and an area of 4,970ha was delimited and mapped out to become a *forêt départementale*. The village of Sima was chosen by virtue of the fact that it was considered particularly at risk from ecological degradation: the village is close to the town of Séguénéga where most of the commercial demand from woodfuel comes from. The bush surrounding Sima has therefore been most targeted by woodcutters for the collection of woodfuel, and the bush around Sima has rapidly become sparse.

In order to operationalize the project, a surveillance committee had to be formed. The *tiis naaba* in Sima recalls that the forest agent based in Séguénéga approached him to identify a suitable area. He appointed a number of residents to form this committee and 15 rules were drawn out to regulate the use of forest resources within that area. Among these rules featured the proscription of wood collection (green and dead) for commercial purposes.

At that time, the local state-sanctioned institution of power was the *préfet*, and he was in charge of ‘legalising’ the initiative. However, the initiative was undertaken at a time when the *préfet* was being transferred – his replacement took some time to arrive, and he never went through with the validation procedure. The lack of legal endorsement meant that those patrolling the forest did not have any proof of their authority and found it hard to prevent the collection of wood, and committee members became demotivated (*tiis naaba*, Sima, interview on 30.01.2012). Another likely reason is that whereas before the creation of the *forêt départementale* those who caught an infraction were liable to a share of the fine imposed on the culprit, the transfer of surveillance responsibility to the committee meant that they were now obligated to do this for free.

The *tiis naaba* did not get discouraged however. By virtue of the authority acquired through the mutual recognition between customary authorities and the forest agent in this initiative, he drafted new regulation. He narrowed down regulation to two rules that were decided upon with the committee with regards to the collection of wood. The first rule pertained to herders who cut down greenwood for building animal pens:

'If you are somebody from our village and you have this kind of wealth [i.e. animals], and if we know that after the harvest you will come help us trample the soil [help us build our houses, meaning if you are a herder but you are no longer nomadic] you will not pay 10,000CFA, you will pay 2,500CFA'

Tiis naaba, Sima, interview on 30.11.2011

A second set of rules pertained more specifically to woodfuel. As pointed out earlier, wood is often gathered in such a way that wholesale merchants and woodcutters are one single individual or group of individuals, and so long as they hold a permit, they are able to collect wood anywhere in the bush. As a way to palliate the issue the

committee of *tiis nanamse* in Sima decided to create woodfuel ‘parks’ at the centre of the village. The measure aimed to restrict access to woodcutters originating from outside the village of Sima, and effectively strived to impose a monopoly over woodfuel production for villagers in Sima. With this measure, the latter would be the only ones able to collect woodfuel around Sima, and the woodcutters/merchants originating from outside the village, and selling woodfuel in Séguénéga would have to buy the woodfuel from the woodcutters in Sima (CVD member, Sima, 02.04.2012; *tiis naaba*, Sima, interview on 30.01.2012). The forest agent did not object because it did not prevent merchants from paying the permit, and it effectively increased oversight in the bush (forest agent, Séguénéga, interview on 04.05.2012).

These conservative measures were expectedly met with some amount of opposition by woodcutters from outside Sima. They claimed that ‘*the bush does not belong to X* [name of the *tiis naaba* in Sima], *but to the government*’ (woodcutter, Bassanga, interview on 21.02.2012). This woodcutter originating from the village neighbouring Sima was essentially contesting the hold of customary authorities in Sima over the bush adjacent to Sima and his own village. This does not come forth strongly in the quote above because directly contesting the legitimacy of customary authorities would be too highly charged a political statement. However the affiliation between the *tiis naaba* and customary authorities in Sima was clear to this respondent, and essentially the fact that the reason invoked was ‘ownership’ of the bush, rather than limited access to material gains, clearly shows that what was at stake was as much political as it was material. Interestingly, a similar measure was attempted in two other villages and they also failed to be implemented by *tiis nanamse* (Doussaré, group interview, 04.04.2012; Sittigo group interview, 09.05.2012).¹¹²

¹¹² I did not manage to establish the reasons for these measures to have failed in these villages, partly because their significance emerged through the analysis rather than in the field. Also I only managed to interview a couple of woodcutters on the issue. At that stage my affiliation with *tiis nanamse* was clear to a number of residents in Sima and outside, and it became difficult for me to conduct candid interviews with woodcutters because they were suspicious of my motives because of my affiliation. This limitation is acknowledged in the methodology section (see Chapter Three). However this ‘gap’ in the data does not negate the results here: the fact that the measure was opposed, and the fact that it was opposed on the grounds reflected in the above quote shows the importance of relations of recognition underlying the durability of institutional power over resources.

In this sense, while *tiis nanamse* are able to lever some public authority over the organisation of woodfuel production, this authority remains precarious. It is a downside of being a ‘twilight’ institution: in order to be able to exercise durable authority over the production of forest resources, twilight institutions rely upon the mutual recognition of other institutions of power. In this case, the misalignment between woodcutters and the forest agent constituted a hindrance to the durability of *tiis nanamse* public authority. In order to understand the conditions under which institutional power emerges and endures over forest resources, we must make ‘twilight institutions’ visible, and shed light on the kinds of relations of recognition that define the contours of the twilight.

Conclusion

The Chapter examines the conditions under which public authority is being exercised in areas where the law is apparently absent or partial. An analysis of relations of recognition informs us about the role of relations of recognition between overlapping and competing institutions of power in the production of authority over resource production and its durability.

In the case of *orpaillage*, gold production is organised by a handful of shaft owners. There are a number of institutions of power that overlap in the ‘gold fields’ and the relation they entertain with each other has given rise to shaft owners as an institution of power that exercises durable authority over gold shafts in the absence of statutory regulation over small-scale gold production. The wealth generated has produced an unequal system over production and the relations of recognition between gold diggers and shaft supervisors towards shaft owners have maintained the authority of the latter. In addition, while statutory regulation over small-scale production is absent in Séguénéga, this does not mean that statutory institutions of power are absent altogether. The relation between the *préfet*, the police and lineage holders in Bakou has further maintained the authority of shaft owners. On the other hand, competing resource claimants also operate or have operated in Séguénéga and in Bakou in particular. The relation between SOMIKA, OREZONE and the state constitute limits to the authority that shaft owners are able to exercise. In this sense, while relations of

recognition illustrate the emergence of institutional power over resources in a condition of weak states, they also show that these institutions of power have limits.

In the case of woodfuel, *tiis nanamse* have emerged as distinct institutions of power over forest resources in general, and woodfuel in particular in some places. Their public authority has emerged out of the relation between the forest agent and customary authorities whose institutional power overlap since the latter was undermined through the partial roll out of statutory regulation over woodfuel. In this context, intermediary institutions of power have emerged. Over the years, state programmes and initiatives undertaken on the ground by state forest agents have reinforced the authority of *tiis nanamse*. Yet, the fact that these institutions of power are associated with customary authorities, and with partial statutory back up, means that the public authority they are able to exercise is limited, as is illustrated through the case of recognition between woodcutters, state and customary authorities. Here again, probing relations of recognition sheds light on the conditions under which institutional power emerges and persists, or not, under conditions of weak state.

One corollary for the exercise of public authority at the twilight is that while the authority of both *tiis nanamse* and shaft owners is rather well established it is actually precarious. This means that these institutions require to be further recognised. In the next Chapter I show that the decentralisation reform constitute a field through which shaft owners and *tiis nanamse* can lever further recognition. The analysis of the way institutions of power collaborate and compete in the field of decentralisation sheds light on autonomy as a powerful idea that is produced and shared about the nature and relevance of the state.

Chapter 7. Shaft owners in the democratic field

In this Chapter I analyse the way institutions of power compete and collaborate over the exercise of authority over gold resources, and the idea that is produced about the state from these relations. I focus particularly on the relation between shaft owners and municipal councillors in relation to the competing claims of a foreign mining investor to gold in Séguénéga. I show that autonomy is a principle that underlies the relation between shaft owners and municipal councillors, and that it emerges as an idea that is shared between them about the relevance of the state, thereby contributing to its dynamics of formation. One aspect that is often invoked to characterise weak states is the fact that policy provisions are rarely devised in practice. Here we see that the lack of policy implementation and the relation that institutions of power relate within the gap between policy ‘vision’ and implementation is precisely what contributes to state formation.

The first part of the Chapter analyses the way shaft owners enter the field of decentralisation. Previously we have seen that they have acquired authority through a variety of relations, which safeguards their autonomy vis-à-vis government-sanctioned frameworks, even though their authority remains relatively fragile. Here we see that shaft owners enter the field of decentralisation as municipal councillors, as a way to reinforce their authority, but they operate in relative isolation from the municipal council. They carry out elaborate initiatives ‘in the name of decentralisation’ although these are not strictly legal, and this often brings them in opposition to the municipal council in Séguénéga. The engagement of shaft owners in the field of decentralisation therefore serves to reinforce their authority, but it also produces a fragmented political field in Séguénéga opposing the municipal council and shaft owners, and the dividing line is their respective search for greater autonomy.

The second half of this Chapter brings this insight in relation to the concept of political field. This concept helps to scrutinise the effects of statutory frameworks as ‘structures of opportunities’ while integrating the ubiquitous gap between ‘vision and implementation’ as an integral dynamics of state formation, rather than a manifestation of its failure. Conceptualising state reforms as a field of relations, rather than the product of rationalities that are imposed from above, helps to shed light on a number of practices that contribute to validating statutory frameworks. State

formation is a product of the relations underlying these practices rather than a ‘thing’ that exists in and of itself. In the last part of the Chapter I analyse the relations that are produced out of the partial roll out of decentralisation reform and its appropriation.

The closing section articulates the politics of autonomy. It demonstrates how the politics of autonomy unfolds in the democratic field and contributes to the dynamics of state formation in Burkina Faso: within regulatory vacuums, twilight institutions have evolved with certain degree of autonomy vis-à-vis government-sanctioned frameworks, when their authority clashes with the imperative of autonomy of the municipal council a particular politics of autonomy plays out in the name of decentralisation, which grants statutory frameworks their relevance, and as such, contributes to state formation.

Shaft owners as municipal councillors

In order to administrate their territory, municipal authorities are encouraged to elaborate a ‘Local development plan’ that identifies ‘local development problems and priorities’. In Séguénéga, one such document was elaborated in 2008, right after the first municipal elections, and with the financial support of the World Bank, via the state programme PNGT2, and through the expertise of a national consulting agency.¹¹³ At that time, *orpaillage* was already full-blown, but despite this, the term ‘*orpaillage*’ only features once in this 93 pages document, and the activity is presented as a ‘risk’ for local constituents, rather than a development opportunity (Plan Communal de Développement, 2008, Séguénéga, p.35).

The poor mention of *orpaillage* in the document is surprising in two senses: Firstly, the fact that the majority of constituents in Séguénéga rely on *orpaillage* would seem a good reason for municipal councillors to get involved with the activity as a way to increase their legitimacy. Secondly, the amount of wealth generated through *orpaillage* presents an unprecedented opportunity for local taxation and for the municipality to be financially autonomous.

¹¹³ As a reminder, the *Programme Nationale de Gestoin des Terroirs* (PNGT) is the precursor of decentralisation in Burkina Faso, as explained in Chapter Four.

The main reason why *orpaillage* is not taken into account as a development opportunity is to be understood in the fact that the activity is technically illegal, or ‘*not encouraged*’, as the secretary general at the municipal office put it (Séguénéga, interview on 28.10.2011; see also Ministry of Territorial Administration staff, Ouagadougou, 19.12.2012; PRGLA head officer, Ouagadougou, interview on 28.12.2012). Under these circumstances, the relation that shaft owners and municipal councillor entertain with one another is an ambiguous one. Below I show that the way they collaborate and compete is mediated by the discourse of autonomy that characterises the democratic field, and their relations have a lot to do with taxation.

Failed attempt at taxing orpaillage: strained relations

As seen in Chapter Four, *orpaillage* does not contribute anything to the municipal budget. The fact that the activity is technically illegal means that it cannot be taxed. However, municipal councillors have been given certain discretionary powers to create local taxes and they have exercised this power in relation to *orpaillage* in Séguénéga.

In 2009, the municipal council appointed six municipal councillors to collect a small tax on every shaft but the attempt was short-lived and not very successful (secretary general, Séguénéga, interview on 28.10.2011). In Bakou, I could only find one shaft owner who had paid such a tax, but only by chance, and the encounter was ambiguous. When asked about a gold tax, the shaft owner shyly brought me a stamped tax receipt, as if to ask me what it was. It read 2,000F for a ‘*taxe aurifère*’ and was dated 2010 (shaft owner, Bakou, interview on 30.04.2012). I did not have a camera at the time, and when I went back with one, he claimed not to know where the paper was anymore. Whether this was true or betrayed shame to have paid while others had not, or to have shown something to a stranger that he should have not, his attitude reflected that the tax was an ambiguous and contested practice.

In a village neighbouring Bakou where gold digging is also taking place, shaft owners and supervisors were aware of the tax but suggested that it was never implemented in that village: ‘*The municipal councillors talked to us about that, they said: ‘If you have*

a shaft, you have to pay CFA 1000' but that did not satisfy us. We said that our village also has something to say about that, and we suggested that they only tax 800CFA. We gathered at the school, and we talked about that but people did not agree. Otherwise they [the councillors] came, they tried, but they did not get anything' (shaft owner, Gambo, interview on 09.11.2011).

There were two reasons brought forward to explain this failed attempt. Firstly, it was widely believed that members of the municipal council in charge of the tax collection embezzled the money and gold diggers refused to pay for this reason (municipal councillor, Séguénéga, 28.10.2011). Secondly, municipal councillors also claimed that shaft owners '*refused to pay and to contribute to the damage they did to the municipality*' (municipal councillor, Séguénéga, interview on 09.12.2011). Thus, the struggle of the municipal council to become autonomous strained its relation with shaft owners.

This does not mean that in gold mining villages, residents refuse to pay taxes altogether however. For example the respective responsibility of municipal councilors and CVD representatives regarding the collection of other taxes was hotly debated at one of the ordinary session of the municipal council I attended (field notes 05.12.2011).¹¹⁴ The debate was related to the collection of a mandatory set of taxes over animal carts and guns. CVD representatives felt they were relegated the difficult job of collecting the money by municipal councillors. They argued that collecting taxes was hard and brought discord between themselves and those they collected taxes with, and the fact that they were not adequately compensated for undertaking this job. In Bakou, one CVD representative complained to me that this put him in trouble with his fellow village men (CVD representative, Bakou, interview on 17.12.2011). In this sense, people in Bakou do pay taxes; they may simply not be prepared to pay taxes related to gold production.

¹¹⁴ As a reminder, *Conseils Villageois de Développement* (CVD) are village-level committees that liaise with the municipal council under decentralization. They are nominated on a consensual basis and they are expected to carry out the tasks appointed to them by municipal councilors in the their village.

This state of affair has brought tensions between shaft owners and municipal councillors in Séguénéga, and it is common for the latter to express public disapproval towards shaft owners. The school teacher in Bakou for example explained that during a public event organised by UNICEF related to improving children education, *'the mayor gave them [shaft owners] a hard time, he said during the meeting that they shouldn't be surprised if his children do better than theirs since they don't send their own to school'* (schoolteacher, Bakou, interview on 03.11.2011). There are countless such occasions, like speeches and meetings, when municipal councillors publicly express contempt towards shaft owners and advise citizens against engaging in *orpaillage* activity. Whether this is a cause or a result of shaft owners' reticence towards taxation imposed by municipal councillors is not clear. What is noteworthy on the other hand, is that the imperative of autonomy for the municipality clashes with the autonomy that shaft owners enjoy vis-à-vis statutory frameworks. However the refusal to comply with the taxes imposed by the municipal councillors is not simply related to shaft owners' conservative feelings towards the gold they produce and indeed this non-compliance extends beyond the taxation of shafts.

Addressing collective action dilemma

Another domain where shaft owners and municipal councillors both collaborate and compete is the management of the collective action dilemmas that emerge through *orpaillage* activities. At the time when the CBMP oversaw small-scale mining activities, its agents were also trained to accommodate working arrangements (ex-CBMP agent, Ouagadougou, interview on 04.12.2012). With the disappearance of the CBMP, it is not clear who should fulfil this role. In areas covered by an AAM, this role ought to be filled by the license holders. Where there is no such concession, there is no legal guideline specifying who should fill this position. In Séguénéga, this responsibility is partly fulfilled by municipal councillors and shaft owners. The way municipal councillors addressed collective action issues emerging from *orpaillage* illustrates well the way the imperative of autonomy mediates the relation they are able to entertain with shaft owners.

For example, one typical collective action dilemma that emerges from *orpaillage* work is related to the use of water. Firstly water is required for the use of dangerous chemicals, such as cyanide and mercury, used for the transformation of ore (e.g. Tschakert and Singha 2007).¹¹⁵ In the commune of Séguénéga there are only a couple of sites where cyanide is used. One is situated far enough from inhabitations and from the municipal capital, and it is under the tight control of one of the most renowned shaft owners in the commune. The other site is situated just at the back of the town of Séguénéga close to a waterhole. The narrative related to gold-diggers' careless use of chemicals is well-rehearsed in the national media. In Séguénéga residents tend to imagine that when *orpaillage* activities take place close to water sources they must include the use of these chemicals.¹¹⁶ The *orpaillage* activities taking place close to waterholes in Séguénéga therefore brought serious concern to nearby residents, which they communicated to the municipal councillors.

Over the course of fieldwork in 2011-2012 one issue that became a public concern in Séguénéga was the increasing number of machines used by shaft supervisors to wash the ore, and placed by them on the banks of two important waterholes. In 2011 the number of machines parked on the banks of these waterholes increased.¹¹⁷ These machines are placed near waterholes and pump important amounts of water, which is a scarce resource in North Burkina. The rainy season of 2011 had been poor, and the waterholes were rapidly getting low. This was becoming a problem for those rearing animals as well as those cultivating vegetables next to the waterholes. Anxious herders and vegetable gardeners therefore complained to municipal councillors about the impact of these machines on water availability (municipal councillor, Séguénéga, interview on 09.12.2011). An additional pressuring factor on water availability at the time was the delayed but on-going construction of a large water dam, which had drained important amounts of water from the borehole. A representative from the central Ministry of Agriculture in charge of the project execution complained to

¹¹⁵ There are no clear environmental laws regimenting this. In the case of the AAM sector, the 'safe use of cyanide and mercury' must be described for an AAM to be approved.

¹¹⁶ I found over 260 article published on LaFaso.net about the ecological and health issues arising from the use of cyanide and mercury by *orpaillage* miners For the cyanide search see: <http://www.lefaso.net/spip.php?page=recherche&recherche=cyanure>

¹¹⁷ The number of these machines increased because one shaft owner had acquired a machine that allowed to pull water out of the deep shafts and so an important amount of mineral became suddenly available for transformation.

municipal councillors about the disruption that the machine work of shaft owners constituted for the construction of the dam (general secretary, Séguénéga, Interview on 28.10.2011; AGETEER, Ministry of Agriculture staff, Ouagadougou, interview on 14.02.2012). These factors contributed to pressing municipal councillors to take action against shaft owners, whom usually also own these machines.

During one of the four yearly ordinary session of the municipal council, a decision was taken by councillors to regulate the water used for *orpaillage* activity. It was decided to lease plots out for these machines on the bank of water holes. Municipal councillors decided to charge *'machines at CFA 5,000 a week. At first we charged 13,000 but there were only 3 or 4 machines then [in January 2011]. Now they have 40 around the dam that is being built'* (general secretary, Séguénéga, interview on 02.12.2011). As a way to address the issue, the municipal council adopted a decree aiming to limit the number of machines allowed on the banks of the waterhole. The measure was not successful because the shaft owners refused to pay. Tensions between shaft owners and municipal councillors were reproduced and clearly articulated around the imperative of autonomy.

The mayor clearly expressed his discontent during the municipal council meeting: *'these people [shaft owners] know well about the rules, that they are only hot-heads, they need to be fined now!'* (mayor, Séguénéga, interview on 05.11.2011). Because the taxes were not paid, the council decided on an application of sanctions. It was decided that those who refused to pay would have their machine confiscated and the owner would be fined CFA 100,000 to get his machine back (participant observation, ordinary session of the municipal council, field notes on 05.12.2011).

The local police and the gendarmerie were asked to help sanction recalcitrant miners by picking up the machines of owners who had not paid the fee. The police refused and apologised on the ground that this would take away resources (manpower and a pick-up truck) that were needed to carry out their normal mandate (General Secretary, Séguénéga, interview on 16.12.2012).

The general secretary working for the municipal office was sent to the waterholes to warn the miners about the measure but this became difficult as he recounted: *'Yesterday the mayor forbade the use of machines because the water will be finished soon and animals wont be able to drink. I used to joke with the guys who use the machines, but yesterday I thought these people were going to eat me alive! We had to forbid it because they [machine owners] don't even go where they are told to go'* (General Secretary, Séguénéga, interview on 16.12.2012). Some months later the general secretary's motorcycle was stolen and found again six months later in the waterhole. Before it was even found, it was believed that the theft was an act of score settling, and when it was found there was no longer a shadow of a doubt about the thieves' motives (gold digger, Bakou, interview on 14.12.2012).

Municipal councillors deplored this, accusing shaft owners to be *'only out for themselves'* (mayor, Séguénéga, interview on 15.05.2012). Shaft owners on the other hand accused municipal councillors in Séguénéga to try and extort money from them; they suspected that the money would be going in individuals' pockets rather than those of the municipal budget (several shaft supervisors, Bakou, informal interviews on 06.12.2011). Thus, when *orpaillage* enters the field of decentralisation, tensions evolve between twilight institutions of power and municipal councillors. These tensions are articulated around accusation of wanting to further personal gains. What is at stake when *orpaillage* collides with decentralisation is the respective autonomy of the municipality and of shaft owners.

At the same time, the relation between municipal councillors and shaft owners is not always so confrontational. For example, shaft owners and municipal councillors know each other well, as they have often grown up together. In addition, most people, including municipal councillors, are involved in *orpaillage* directly or indirectly. It was not unusual for municipal councillors for example to receive a visit from more or less prominent shaft owner, and get handed a chicken, or notes of CFA 5,000 or 10,000 (field notes, 06.11.2011). These signs of recognition are usually contained within the private sphere, and are often associated with specific and punctual favours that municipal councillors may have made to shaft owners. The fact that these relations usually take place in the private sphere is significant, but more importantly,

it shows that shaft owners do not necessarily operate or define themselves in opposition to the political field of decentralisation.

Below I elaborate this further. I show another aspect of the way shaft owners become enrolled in decentralisation: municipal councillors from mining villages are often successful shaft owners themselves. I show that the discourse of autonomy promulgated by the decentralisation reform is being appropriated by shaft owners, and the democratic field becomes fragmented as a result.

Shaft owners acting in the name of decentralisation

In the above section I emphasised the fact that the way shaft owners become enrolled in decentralisation is through the imperative of autonomy of the municipal council. Councillors have tried to levy taxes on orpaillage production, but shaft owners have generally opposed them. This has given rise to a fragmented democratic field that opposes municipal councillors and shaft owners along the line of the imperative of autonomy. However in this section I show that the boundary between municipal councillors and shaft owners is porous. Indeed the municipal councillors elected in gold mining villages are also either shaft owners themselves, or closely related to them. In these villages, municipal councillors-cum-shaft owners have been better able to impose taxes than those in Séguénéga. What is relevant here is that shaft owners have entered the democratic field because it serves to reinforce their fragile authority. However, one corollary is that this further fragments their relation with municipal councillors in Séguénéga.

Shaft owners as politicians: Successful attempt at taxing orpaillage

In Bakou municipal councillors are also shaft owners. The elected councillor for example was ‘put there’ initially by one of the shaft owners (CVD representatives, Bakou, group interview on 11.11.2011).¹¹⁸ He was not a particularly powerful man before he gained office, and people recall that ‘*he used to ride a bicycle*’ only a few

¹¹⁸ The reason for this shaft owner to choose the municipal councillor is not clear. However, one CVD member explained that this shaft owner had the authority to choose the party candidate by virtue of the fact that he previously been a village ‘*délégué*’ and a member of CDR during the revolution.

years ago but now that he is councillor he is an important man in the village' (gold digger, Séguénéga, interview on 02.08.2011). The CVD committee is made up of a small group of young shaft supervisors. When asked why they are doing this job, which is essentially voluntary, one CVD representative explained that *'the bosses [shaft owners] told us that they were tired of being in charge, and since we are young, we should learn this job too because soon we will be the ones in charge'* (CVD representative, Bakou, interview on 01.04.2012).

As pointed out in Chapter Six, the authority of shaft owners over the production of gold resources is recognised by the police. Interestingly however the ones dealing more with the police in Bakou are usually the municipal councillor and CVD representatives. One CVD representative in Bakou explained that *'for example when there is a problem, like a fight at the market because gold has been stolen, the councillor calls us [the CVD] at his place and then he calls the gendarmerie but then he sends us away. He works with the gendarmerie you know. If there is a thief they tell him [the thief] to pay 20,000CFA for example and then they divide this between themselves'* (CVD representative, Bakou, group interview on 11.11.2011). What is interesting here is that, the police collaborate with shaft owners specifically via the municipal councillor in gold digging villages. In this sense, while shaft supervisors have evolved in relative isolation from municipal councillors in Séguénéga, decentralisation does serve to reinforce the public authority they are able to exercise in the democratic field.

This is not only the case in Bakou: in Gambo, the municipal councillor is also the most prominent shaft owner in that village. In addition, informal conversations I have had with councillors from villages where gold mining is not an important activity suggested to me that the cases of Gambo and Bakou are not singular. Some of these councillors complained that *'in places where you have gold, councillors have it easy because they make up arrangements with the police and they get an extra income from it'* (Municipal councillor, Séguénéga, 09.11.2012).

While municipal councillors in Séguénéga have found it hard to impose taxes on gold production, in Bakou and surrounding villages like Gambo where *orpaillage* takes

place, within those villages, municipal councillors-cum-shaft owners have been more successful at imposing taxes on *orpaillage*. In Bakou, two kinds of taxes applied. The first kind is a sort of salary that the municipal councillor receives every time bags are being shared out with gold diggers.¹¹⁹ Most shaft supervisors and owners pay this tax, but it is contested among shaft supervisors, and it divides junior and senior supervisors. On the one hand, some of the CVD members, who are also junior supervisors, have complained about this practice, but they have also confided as aspiring to become councillor themselves, for the understandable reason of being able to 'secure an additional income'. On the other hand, the municipal councillor was re-elected in office in 2012, under the auspices of shaft owners. The latter did not seem to find the councillor's 'salary' as problematic as the young shaft supervisors did because it was needed to '*encourage him to make efforts to find solutions for the village*' (shaft owner, Bakou, group interview on 14.11.2011).

What is particularly interesting about this 'salary' is that in other villages where there is no important reserve of gold, CVDs and councillors carry out their jobs on a voluntary basis. They have often complained about the lack of resources at their disposal, and this has been a major de-motivating factor for them. In this sense, not only does decentralisation grants more authority to shaft owners, the latter also give relevance to the reform. By virtue of the revenues generated, they are better able to carry out their mandate as village representatives.

It should be noted however that in Bakou, the fact that the councillor receives a 'salary' does not give him more 'weight' at municipal level, and indeed he was rarely seen in Séguénéga at the municipal office, and let alone at the municipal council meeting session. This may be explained by the fact that some municipal councillors in gold mining villages feel '*higher municipal councillors are biased against miners and their activities*' (shaft owner, Gambo, interview on 09.11.2011), as one of them complained in Gambo. In this sense while the municipality tends to have little to do with mining villages, municipal councillors in mining village have a lot to do with decentralisation, and each operates 'in the name of autonomy', but in isolation from one another.

¹¹⁹ The extent to which this tax applies in other mining villages is not clear as the analysis here derives only from several informants in Bakou.

The second set of taxes that are levied in Bakou and other village, such as Gambo, further illustrates the ways in which the imperative of autonomy mediates relations that reproduce the relevance of decentralisation within the democratic field. These taxes are collected informally on the straw warehouses situated in the markets in gold digging villages. These warehouses are sorts of offices where shaft owners conduct their dealings related to the organisation of work in the shafts, selling and processing some of the ore. In Bakou and a neighbouring village for example, the CVD committee decided to impose a yearly tax of CFA 5,000 (GBP 6) on every straw warehouse at the market. In addition those who own stone-crushing machines at the market pay a yearly fee of CFA 10,000 (GBP 12) (CVD representatives, Bakou, group interview on 11.11.2011).

The extent to which taxes on straw warehouses are applied beyond Bakou is not clear, but in other villages, similar arrangements have evolved. In Bangassila for example, a village situated a few kilometres from Bakou, the stilt that is left behind after the ore is processed is put in one place and sold in big quantities in the name of the village. Each truckload is sold for CFA 5,000 and the money is collected by the CVD in Bangassila, and the revenues go to an account created for the village (shaft owner, Bakou, interview on 22.10.2011).

It is interesting to note here is that residents in gold mining villages are unwilling to contribute CFA 2,000 (GBP 2.40) each year for the municipality while they are ready to place a lot more in the hands of their village representatives. Indeed refusal to pay this tax on gold to the municipality seems to reflect the idea that it belongs to the village rather than the municipality.

Another indication for this is that members of the family lineage whose land the strawhouses are on have been able to claimed a share of these 'taxes' and it seems they may have obtained CFA 1,000 (GBP 1.20) out of each strawhouse (Shaft owner, Bakou, interview on 06.05.2012).¹²⁰ Of course these arrangements are not strictly

¹²⁰ Here again, the extent to which this 'tax' is applied elsewhere is not clear, but interestingly, two shaft owners in Bakou have noted that since this tax started to be applied by lineage holders, it became 'copied' in other villages (Shaft owner, Bakou, interview on 03.04.2012; shaft owner, Bakou, interview on 12.12.2012).

legal, and they are contested by some. For example, one man, a ‘stranger’ who had moved to Bakou, complained about this tax to the municipal office (secretary general, Séguénéga, interview on 16.12.2012). The mayor then sent a delegation to ask shaft owners to stop collecting these taxes, but a year later the measure continued to be implemented in Bakou (shaft supervisor, Bakou, interview on 22.10.2011). These taxes are justified on the ground that since a number of ‘strangers’ have moved to Bakou with the discovery of gold, it is only normal that natives in Bakou preserve their original claim to gold. Interestingly, the imperative of autonomy under decentralisation is precisely what allows them to do so.

What this tells us again is that while shaft owners entertain certain autonomy vis-à-vis statutory frameworks, they have not rejected the political field of decentralisation altogether. On the contrary, they have engaged with the discourse in a way that enhances their authority but in ways that safeguards their autonomy. The fact that municipal councillors in gold mining villages are the ones dealing with the police is a case in point. At the same time, they have appropriated the political field of decentralisation in a way that keeps them apart from the rest of the rest of municipal councillors. In a way, it can be argued that the way they appropriated decentralisation has brought them into competition with municipal councillors in Séguénéga: while gold mining villages have become more economically and politically autonomous through decentralisation, this has come to the detriment of autonomy at the municipal level where the councillors are struggling to levy taxes from *orpaillage* and to impose their authority on shaft owners. It may be argued that shaft owners have not really appropriated the field of decentralisation in the sense that they may only be serving their own interests, but below I show that the way the money collected was re-distributed extends beyond shaft owners’ search for personal gain, and rather, it was effectuated ‘in the name of decentralisation’.

In the name of decentralisation

Shaft owners justify the taxes they collect in Bakou in ways that resonate remarkably with the decentralisation rationale. One shaft owner explained that *‘It is a good thing [...] we [shaft owners] started this because many people came to Bakou to work with gold. When they did, we realised that something needed to be done in the name of the*

village – we did not want for the gold to finish before something was done for the village, so we decided to collect this money and put its management in the hands of the CVD [...] the CVD is a good thing, we wouldn't be able to make that rule otherwise! You see we were told that everyone has to fight for themselves, for the development of their own village, that is why the CVD put this measure in place! (Shaft owner, Bakou, interview on 06.05.2012). The description of decentralisation as 'everyone fighting for themselves' and as 'people being abandoned by the government' is a recurrent one. What is interesting here however is that, through tax payment, residents acknowledge the authority of shaft owners as municipal councillors, but they do not necessarily recognise that of the municipal council as a whole. The fact that the tax was not shared with the wider municipal council does not mean that shaft owners have necessarily kept the money for themselves however. On the one hand, it was not possible to trace every penny of this money beyond the fact that it is not being shared with the municipality, and clearly some must have ended in individual pockets. On the other, some amount was redistributed into what was considered by shaft owners as 'the collective good', and this further illustrates how the imperative of autonomy struggled over by shaft owners served to reproduce the relevance of the 'democratic field'.

As noted above, taxes were collected on the straw warehouses at the market place, and in Bakou there are 40 or so warehouses so the sum collected through taxation is an important one. In Bakou some of the money made was used to build a new mosque. In addition, CFA 500,000 (GBP 597) were given as a donation to the neighbouring village of Gambo towards the construction of a school and a rural health post. These had been a concern of priority in Gambo because of the great distance that separates the village from education and medical services situated in the town of Séguénéga. The municipal councillor in Gambo explained that a request had been submitted to the mayor and to the *préfet* without avail. In the end, shaft owners took the matter in their own hands (shaft owner/municipal councillor, Gambo, interview on 09.11.2011). The school and the rural health post in Gambo were built out of financial contributions from neighbouring villages, including Bakou, from members of the village residing in the capital Ouagadougou and from shaft owners in Gambo (ex-

Bakou resident, Ouagadougou, interview on 21.11.2012; Bakou school teacher, Bakou, interview on 24.12.2012).

Competition over autonomy in the field of decentralisation

In the first part of this Chapter I analyse the way institutional powers compete and collaborate in the field of decentralisation, and the kind of idea that emerges out of their relation. Specifically I show that autonomy is a fundamental underlying idea that is produced about the state when institutions of power compete and collaborate over the exercise of authority over the production of gold resources in the field of decentralisation.

As seen in Chapter four, the political field of decentralisation is characterised by autonomy. Under conditions of weak states, local governments are poor yet they are expected to become autonomous. *Orpaillage* has generated considerable wealth and thereby constitutes an opportunity for local governments to become autonomous, yet municipal councillors have not been able to raise taxes due to opposition by shaft owners. In addition to the considerable wealth generated locally, *orpaillage* has also created some collective action issues that the municipality is expected to address. However this imperative of autonomy clashes with the autonomy enjoyed by shaft owners. Shaft owners have opposed the initiatives of municipal councillors, but they have not rejected the political field of decentralisation altogether. On the contrary, decentralisation has provided shaft owners an opportunity to reinforce their authority, and they have engaged in the political field of decentralisation as a result. Where most of *orpaillage* work takes place, shaft owners have appointed individuals to become municipal councillors and CVD representatives. They have elaborated a tax regime ‘in the name of decentralisation’, which better addresses their priorities. As such, the field of decentralisation allows shaft owners to reinforce their authority, and even to expand it, albeit beyond the shaft, but their initiatives ‘in the name of decentralisation’ also enhances the relevance of the democratic field. However as they have become enrolled in decentralisation, the autonomy shaft owners have enjoyed vis-à-vis statutory frameworks has become problematic. Specifically, it comes in direct opposition with municipal councillors in Séguénéga. This contentious relation is

specifically articulated around ideas of autonomy promulgated by discourses of decentralisation.

So far I have shown that the competition and collaboration between overlapping institutions of power, give rise to a particular relation that is articulated around autonomy. In the following section, the struggle for autonomy is epitomised as an idea of the state that is produced and shared through decentralisation. Below I illustrate how this relation gives rise to a particular politics of autonomy, and that politics is precisely the way decentralisation contributes to state formation in Burkina Faso.

The politics of autonomy in the gold fields of Séguénéga

In the latter part of this Chapter I analyse the way shaft owners and municipal councillors collaborate and compete over authority in a case where a foreign mining company lays claims upon gold. This claim fundamentally transforms the stakes of autonomy for both municipal councillors and shaft owners, and I show that the kind of politics that unfolds, namely electoral politics, is a product of these changing stakes on the one hand, and of the way shaft owners have engaged in the field of decentralisation, as politicians, on the other hand, in the name of decentralisation.

As noted before, the places where shaft owners work are also held under an exploration permit. Several permits have been held over the years. The first one was acquired in 1996 by a Canadian 'Junior' company called Mutual Resources Ltd. over an area of 400 square kilometres.¹²¹ In 2001 Mutual Resources sold the permit to another Canadian Junior called OREZONE that still held it at the time of fieldwork.¹²² In 2011 the exploration permit held by OREZONE was about to expire, and it was sold to a new Investor, AMARA, in May 2012 for USD 26.5 million (GBP 16.3

¹²¹ In the mining jargon a 'Junior' refers to an investor company that is exclusively involved in mineral exploration. A 'Junior' upgrades to a 'Major' if it decides to engage in industrial gold extraction, but as a general rule, 'Juniors' are mainly venture capitalists that rely on the resources raised in capital markets and on the sales of their exploration permits to finance their exploration work.

¹²² This permit transformed over the years and while this particular Investor held five contiguous permits in the area when it started working, in 2008 it circumscribed its exploratory work over a 124square km area that covers the four orpaillage mining sites. It is from that time, exploratory work intensified and the relations with shaft supervisory became more tense.

million). The results of exploration work were indeed promising but in a context of credit crisis, OREZONE lacked the liquidity to invest in large-scale extraction. AMARA on the other hand was keen and able to apply for an exploitation permit. The company owns a large scale open-pit mine about 30km south of Séguénéga. This mine that was close to ending its life cycle, and building an open-pit mine in Séguénéga would allow to 'prolong its life'. At the end of 2012, AMARA started conducting an Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) study that is required by law to be able to apply for an exploitation permit, which was granted on the 3rd July 2013.¹²³

In order to understand how the politics of autonomy unfolds in Séguénéga, a note must be made about the legal frameworks pertaining mining and decentralisation because these transform the stakes of autonomy under the competing claims by the large-scale mining investor. The revenue that is generated through large-scale mining permit taxes ought to be re-distributed to municipalities. Companies holding an exploration or an exploitation license pay, among others, a superficiary tax to the central government. Specifically, 20% of this tax must go to the municipality on which the permits are held (Mining Code 2003, art. 82). This tax is rarely respected however in the case of exploration permits (Oxford Management Policy 2011). The reason why this percentage is rarely devolved to municipal governments is supposedly because of the great number of exploration permits currently held in Burkina Faso, and the fact that they are often held over several communes means that the calculation of the share that each commune should be attributed is complicated (Ministry of Mining staff, Ouagadougou, interview on 23.02.2012). In Séguénéga, municipal councillors recall to have never received a share of this tax. However in the case of exploitation permits, which are fewer, a small percentage of the superficiary tax is actually evolved to municipal coffers. Municipal councillors in Séguénéga are well-aware of the potential benefits that this could represent (mayor, Séguénéga, interview on 24.12.2012)

The second part of this Chapter analyses the way tensions arising during the ESIA procedure between shaft owners and municipal councillors are expressed, which

¹²³ <http://www.lefaso.net/spip.php?article54922>

sheds light on the significance of autonomy as an idea that is produced and shared as municipal councillors and shaft owners compete over authority over gold resources. I pay particular attention to the way they relate in the context of competing claims to gold by a large-scale mining investors that have been operating in Séguénéga over the years because their claim bring to light the tensions that underlie the politics of autonomy in Séguénéga. Mobilising the concept of the political field, I illustrate how decentralisation contributes to state formation through the politics of autonomy in Burkina Faso.

Municipal councillors siding with OREZONE

Interviewer: *What about resources devolved to municipalities in the mining sector ?*

Respondent: *In that domain it is totally vague! That is a major lack. The mining code does not make any room for the municipalities [...] in truth what happened is that the [foreign] investors have bought permits before the municipalities were in place so today they do not have municipalities as interlocutors but the state.*

*Local governance Program staff*¹²⁴, Ouagadougou, interview on 28.11.2012

Contrary to the statement above, in Séguénéga, municipal councillors have been the first port of call for OREZONE. This does not mean that this statement is wrong. This simply means that the statement only reflects statutory framework advocacy. True enough, municipal councillors are not well included in the mining legislation, nor are they included in its application. However on the ground, municipal councillors are crucial. They are the ones ‘representing the population’ and they are often therefore valuable interlocutors for foreign investors eager to bring some legitimacy to their activity on the ground.

In 2011 OREZONE was still unclear whether its exploration work could be upgraded to an exploitation project, and good relations needed to be entertained with municipal councillors. This was done by way of several public interventions by OREZONE staff aiming to educate municipal officials about the lifecycle of a mine. Casual courtesy visits at the municipality office were also often paid by the chief geologist to inform

¹²⁴ This is a World Bank funded state programme.

municipal councillors that *'they do not know yet when the mine will start, but the drilling results look very promising'* (fieldnotes on 06.12.2011). By emphasising the possibility that a mine would be built in the near future, OREZONE presented itself as a prospective source of economic development for the municipality, rather than a mere land speculator. In what follows I examine the way relations between shaft owners and municipal councillors transformed in the context of a competing claim over gold resources.

While they tend to isolate themselves from municipal public life, shaft owners also happen to participate to some activities organised by municipal councillors, but in these cases they are often reminded of their marginal status. In 2011 Séguénéga received the honour to launch the national reforestation campaign. This event is important. It symbolises the issue of land degradation around which much of social and political life is engineered in rural Burkina (Englebert 1996). Long lasting speeches and acknowledgment thereof by various national and regional authorities are the tradition in these events. On that occasion, and in line with its CSR policy, OREZONE made a CFA 300,000 (GBP 362) donation in the form trees to be given out to villages for the campaign. Conforming to this type of ceremonial tradition, a staff from OREZONE was handed a certificate of acknowledgement preceded by a speech by the mayor of the commune who stressed how important OREZONE might be for the municipality in the near future (see figure below).



Figure 7. Opening ceremony of the 2011/2012 reforestation campaign in Séguénéga

Interestingly, at this same event, a congregation of municipal councillors approached shaft owners to ask them to make a contribution; justified by the fact that much environmental degradation was caused by their activity (friend of the mayor, Séguénéga, interview on 20.01.2012). The shaft owners agreed to contribute by replanting the municipal high school grounds, and one of the richest artisanal shaft

supervisors from Gambo sponsored the event by providing drinking water supplies. However, unlike OREZONE, the shaft owners did not receive a certificate. They did not receive any other form of public acknowledgement for their participation, unlike OREZONE. Whether there was a threshold within the donation made that defined whether or not public acknowledgment could be made is not sure, but in effect, the message that was sent in their direction is that their contribution is not as valuable as that of OREZONE.

The drinking water donation made by the shaft owners from Gambo was considered by some municipal councillors as simply a way to advertise his new business, as it was later noted to me by one municipal councillor when I asked him about the lack of public acknowledgement to shaft owners (municipal councillor, Séguénéga, interview on 10.05.2012). Indeed the shaft owner in Gambo had just recently started this business, using the machines dedicated to pulling water out of the shafts in order to bag mineral water to be sold and rightly about advertisement motives. What is interesting here is the fact that municipal councillors did not consider appropriate to acknowledge the contribution of shaft supervisors in the same way they did that of OREZONE. This positioning is to be understood as a result of the tensions between shaft owners and municipal councillors articulated around the imperative of autonomy.

Shaft owners and OREZONE: cordial but strained relations

In order to understand how the idea of autonomy emerged from the relation between shaft owners and municipal councillors, we must also make a note about the relation entertained between shaft owners and OREZONE. Municipal councillors are not the only interlocutors for OREZONE on the ground, and indeed shaft owners were often mobilised.

Exploration is mostly non-invasive. It consists in drilling boreholes to establish the composition of the underground, which do not systematically overlap with *orpillage* sites. In addition Junior companies do not extract gold (or at least they ought not to)

and they do not compete with *orpaillage* mining on a daily basis.¹²⁵ The presence of OREZONE in the field is generally sparse and discontinuous, characterised by rare times of intense drilling and prolonged times when no work takes place at all. When the drilling happened, engineers were based at an office, a building compound they inherited from the previous license owner, located half way between Séguénéga and Bakou. Labourers working for OREZONE on the drilling work were generally from outside the area, but they were accommodated in rented houses in Séguénéga and often remained there between the times when borehole-drilling work was undertaken. On the ground they sometimes used heavy machinery, and although they would not systematically warn residents when they did, they usually worked at accepted distances from inhabitations and from the shafts.

Unlike Mutual Resources, OREZONE did pay compensation to farmers-cum-shaft owners when they dug in their field. While a few complained that some promises were not always kept, compensation was paid in many cases, and when they were not, the amount was generally insignificant compared to the income farmers-cum-shaft owners would get so this was never a real issue (shaft owners, Bakou, group interview on 11.11.2011). In fact some of the work undertaken by OREONE was welcome by shaft owners. For example I often heard that the advantage to having OREZONE in the area is that they built the dust tracks traced to facilitate vehicle access to their main drilling sites.¹²⁶ Shaft owners use cheap motorcycle vehicles, which they travel well, and these roads were a non-negligible saving on engine breakdowns. So while OREZONE did present a threat to the livelihood of shaft owners, relations with OREZONE were mostly cordial.

This does not mean that tensions did not emerge. In particular, those who do not have a shaft over on the hill would happen to complain that OREZONE would be '*following them*' and start drilling wherever new shafts were being discovered by diggers (shaft supervisors, Bakou, group interview on 14.11.2011). In these cases,

¹²⁵ The extent to which Juniors actually do not extract gold is a contentious point that is worth acknowledging here that there is no oversight from central government on this and ministry staff (Ministry of Mines staff, Ouagadougou, interview on 06.12.2012).

¹²⁶ Interestingly, these dust tracks are the main explanatory factor for land degradation observed through a time series analysis of satellite imagery for the commune of Séguénéga (see Palacios-Lopez 2013).

ground-level staff can be more or less forceful, and residents in Bakou bitterly remember the time when Mutual Resources used to operate. At the time of the first permit, a burkinabè engineer called Richard Zongo undertook the exploration work. As exploration manager and team leader on the projects, Zongo was the 'boss' on the site. That period of exploration has left a few scars in the landscape by way of 2m deep trenches in and around villages. Residents remember that the man used to come by helicopter, sometimes with white men, and they used to dig in the middle of houses, giving no compensation and 'traumatising populations' (fieldnotes on 16.11.2011 and 29.11.2011). Mutual Resources Ltd. dug very close to habitations, sometimes even inside private compounds, and never paid any compensation. OREZONE was considered comparatively more civilised, and shaft owners conformed that OREZONE '*treated [them] well, or at least better than Zongo [Mutual Resources Ltd.] did*' (Shaft owner's wife, Bakou, interview on 14.11.2011; also participant observation on 29.11.2011).

Several individual interviews and a group interview with CVD committee members in Bakou further investigated the extent and the nature of the interface between OREZONE and shaft owners. Three particular issues repeatedly came up and both were related to inappropriate places for OREZONE to drill: The first regarded drilling work in 'forbidden places' or *zii kidse* (sg. *Zii kidga*) that are places of particular spiritual significance where nature should not be violated. When OREZONE happened to drill in these places, monetary compensation was given to the village elders to buy animals and undertake sacrifices that would repair the spiritual damage. The second issue is related to the fact that OREZONE sometimes effectuated drilling work individuals' fields without necessarily giving appropriate compensation. The third and most contentious issue for *orpaillage* miners regarded OREZONE filling *orpaillage* shafts (shaft owner, Bakou, interview on 02.08.2011. CVD representatives, Bakou, interview on 14.11.11; Municipal councillor, Bakou, interview on 12.04.2012). This happened a few times in 2004 and 2005 and I was explained by the company senior technician that in some places the underground has become highly unstable because of the numerous *orpaillage* shafts that need to be filled up to stabilise the soil and allow drilling work (Mining engineer Orezone, Séguénéga, interview on 27.10.2011).

In these instances, OREZONE hired two Community Relations Officers (CROs) in order to mediate between residents and the company. The first one is a national coordinator CRO based at the main office in Ouagadougou who was rarely onsite and only effectuated visits when interaction with local residents became strained. The second one was hired among residents in Séguénéga. As a way to keep track of relations with residents, the national CRO created a record (*'cahier des parties prenantes'*) for local complaints and the way they were addressed, but few of these were recorded for Bakou (fieldsite visit, Orezone compound Séguénéga, participant observation on 29.11.2011).

It is not easy to anticipate and to bring light to the networks that would serve residents to access jobs, but shaft owners perceived that pertaining to the mayor's network is helpful. In July 2011 a notice was put up on the municipal office notice board advertising jobs available pertaining the facilitation of communication between the Investor and communities. The notice seemed to advertise 20 such jobs, but it turned out that only one was available at the level of Séguénéga. A couple of qualified and dynamic young men I knew applied for the job, but it went to the mayor's nephew. When the research permit was sold to another company seeking an exploitation permit, the local community relations officer was hired again AMARA. Some jobs were again advertised this time pertaining security around work sites. Some of the people who were hired as security guards for AMARA were young members of the mayor's close network who showed him political support when it was needed during the municipal electoral campaign. Conversely none were hired within the network of shaft owners (participant observation, Séguénéga, December 2012). This is not to argue that being a member of the Mayor's network was a requirement for employment, but rather to point out that under conditions of competing resource claims, political fragmentation stifles and specific political configurations cement within the democratic field. Indeed, while the association between municipal councillors and OREZONE was also a manifestation of the growing tensions between OREZONE and shaft owners, it is important to note that some among the latter also aspired to those jobs:

Interviewer: *Are you going to seek a job at the mine?*

CVD representative: *Well it is not really clear, only if it is a good job, because right now my job in Rollo is going good, I can get around 170,000 per bag, and I don't know that I can make that sort of money with a job with the white people. But I talked to one man [the CRO] who gave me his phone number, he said that if I had questions I should go and talk to him about it. I have been thinking about it for over a month, but I think I won't do it.*

Interviewer: *What questions do you want to ask him?*

CVD representative: *I want to ask him about the kinds of possibilities that exist for a job. But then I thought that I should wait. If I call him now, and things like last time happen, I won't be able to speak for the village properly. Right now I need to concentrate on the fight for the village. Because if he says he has a job for me and at the same time the people in the village need me to speak for them I won't be able to do either job properly.*

CVD representative/shaft supervisor, Bakou, interview on 11.12.2012

The quote above illustrates the fact that the dual membership of this CVD as both shaft supervisor and municipal representative places him in an ambiguous position. On the one hand shaft owners know that their capability to access the resource is limited by their lack of rights, and displacement would put their livelihoods in jeopardy, but at the same time, the industrial project offers the possibilities of jobs, and positioning oneself in this ambiguous context is crucial. The fact that shaft owners are also municipal councillors means that they could position themselves closer to municipal councillors in Séguénéga as a way to have a better chance to access jobs with the mine, but doing so, would also mean that they are no longer able to represent the interests of 'the village'. This again shows that the democratic field is a divided one, and the dividing line again is characterised by the respective but competing imperatives of autonomy for shaft owners and for municipal councillors. The division that characterises the democratic field means that its relevance is not at all a given, but rather it emerges from the ways in which institutions of power position themselves in relation to one another. More specifically, it depends on the way this field is mobilised by institutions of power, such as municipal councillors and shaft owners, and this is elaborated below.

Mobilising the democratic field

'It is the central state that gives the authority to the mine over land, in the meantime municipal councillors sit there, and they don't get involved; it is only when they have a knife at their throat and when things start to get critical that they will get involved, it's a bit like skinning a toad: you can take the leg off a toad, even start to skin it, it is only when you reach the throat that it starts to react'

General Secretary, Séguénéga, interview on 05.12.2012

The above quote illustrates the 'ambiguous and contentious' (Bebbington et al. 2008) nature of development prospects that industrial mining may bring, both for municipal councillors as well as for shaft owners. For municipal councillors in Séguénéga the project may bring greater revenue than *orpaillage* affords them and a potential riddance of shaft owners who question their authority. On the other hand, the dispossession on miners carries the risk dispossessed miners might rebel against authorities. For shaft owners the prospects of dispossession are clearly disastrous, and they are well aware that 'even their strength cannot stop it' (shaft owners, Bakou, group interview on 26.12.2012). At the same time, they also know that they are entitled to compensation and maybe also to jobs promised by the Investor, and opposition has to be carefully trodden. I examine how shaft owners and municipal councillors in Séguénéga respectively manage the uncertainty pertaining to possibilities of dispossession and promises of development. Social relations filling, as Luning (2012: 24) eloquently phrases it, 'the gap between what is and what may become' shape the relevance of decentralisation.

This latter section examines how competition over authority between institutions of power produces the democratic field specifically through the shared idea of decentralisation as a struggle for autonomy. I pay particular attention to the changing relation between municipal councillors and shaft owners, which stifled during the ESIA process and in the ambiguous context described above. I analyse the arena upon which the opposition between municipal councillors and shaft supervisors is expressed. Rather than paying attention to the outcome of the contestation, I pay attention to the ways in which the struggle for autonomy becomes an idea that is

shared and contributes to granting some relevance to the statutory framework of decentralisation, and thereby also, contributes to dynamics of state formation.

Rejecting the 'bureaucratic' field

One way in which the relevance of the democratic field is enhanced is in the way resource and authority claimants position themselves within the bureaucratic field. So far we have seen that unequal relations of power develop in relation to the mining project, and a fragmented political configuration characterises the democratic field. However far from undermining the relevance of democratic decentralisation, the politics playing out between shaft owners and municipal councillors around the politics of autonomy serves to enhance the relevance of the democratic field, as it becomes opposed to the bureaucratic field.

While shaft owners clearly have a lot to loose from the industrial mining project, opposition appears a little futile given that it is 'the central state that gives authority over the land'. In addition, opposition seems also risky with regards to the prospects of compensation. One resident from Sima asked to comment on the mining project recalled a rumour that circulated about compensation schemes in the context of another industrial mine that was built by the same investor a few kilometers south: *'When they were building the road for the mine in Kalsaka there was a field with two owners. The first person accepted to get compensation and the people from the mine gave him a donkey cart and some money, but they did not give anything to the one who resisted'* (Sima resident, Bakou, interview on 11.12.2012). On the contrary, others argued that *'They [shaft owners] have to resist! The authorities cannot give the land like that; if they don't resist they wont come away with anything'* These comments illustrate well the Cornelian dilemma that shaft owners are faced with. At the same time this also illustrates the dilemma faced by local authorities in charge of leading the negotiations between AMARA and shaft owners.

During the ESIA process a study was conducted by a team of investigators hired from the capital and including some state agents, like the forest agent and those other 'street level bureaucrats' in charge of agriculture, which aimed to evaluate the extent of 'social and environmental' damage that would be incurred by the mine and

evaluate the costs of retribution. This involved several rounds of a census to inventory the goods of residents that would have to be compensated. While residents in Bakou responded to the first round, they vehemently opposed the second. In this occasion, it was the local state authority, the *préfet*, who was sent to meet the residents from gold digging villages to introduce this new round of survey, but the bureaucrats were ousted by residents in several villages: *‘They chased them out! They complained that the préfet was not representing their interests. They even shouted at him saying that they cannot simply come down to their village and tell them what to do. They [AMARA] even called the CRS in Ouaga in case something big happened’* (Séguénéga resident/AMARA security staff, Séguénéga, interview on 10.12.2012). In a neighbouring village, the general secretary was sent as an alternative, but to no avail. He commented that *‘the people in Bakou are really not easy; also the other day in [Gambo] we went for a meeting but I saw their faces and I refused to get out of the car. At the previous meeting, the shaft owners sent us to sit in the dirt among the tombs!! They took it too far. I might have been sitting on a fetish without knowing it! They weren’t happy!’* (general secretary, Séguénéga, interview on 10.12.2012). In this sense the main grievance expressed by shaft owners through their opposition was the fact that the municipal councillors had sided with AMARA that was acting against their interests and they refused to recognise their authority as they were sent to them as their representative in the consultation process.

The fact that the *préfet* was sent is relevant considering that municipal councillors had always been the first port of call for the company. Similarly, when residents complained that the *préfet* did not represent their interest, the municipal office general secretary, a civil servant, was sent to address this complaint. The fact that state bureaucrats were sent on the frontlines instead of elected councillors sends a strong message to residents in these villages: the issue is not one that they ought to have a say on. For residents in these villages, this is another indication that the ‘state has sold the land’, that the mine is a done deal, and that in this case the matter is one of enforcement rather than representation. When I ask the owner of the small bar in Bakou why he thinks the *préfet* and general secretary were sent to these consultation meetings he suggested instead that *‘municipal councillors really ought to be the one negotiating with them [residents in Bakou]’* (bar owner, Bakou, interview on

11.12.2012). What is relevant here is that, by rejecting representatives from the ‘bureaucratic field’, shaft owners and residents in gold mining villages more widely effectively give relevance to the democratic field.

Giving credence to electoral politics

It is unlikely that the outcome of the meeting would have been different had the Mayor led them. Yet, it is worth wondering why municipal councillors did not lead these meetings, taking into account the fact that they are the ‘representatives’ of citizens. A few elements of answer to this question can be brought on here, and indeed these also bring to light the significance of the democratic field for gold diggers, despite growing unequal relations of power and authority between them and municipal councillors. Above I showed that playing outside the bureaucratic field enhances the democratic field. In other words this operates as relations of recognition play out through electoral politics that unfolded around the mining project. This is not to say that democracy works as an advocacy. Rather, this is to say that electoral politics becomes a privileged ‘game’ through which the democratic field asserts itself as a valuable terrain for politics.

Firstly, as stated above, permission for the industrial mining project is granted by the central government and ought to be dealt with by bureaucrats rather than politicians. Secondly, municipal councillors could have joined, but they probably did not, knowing fine well that they would have to face opposition, and that this was all the more likely in the context of an already difficult relation with shaft owners. One last and more interesting element of answer can be found from the Mayor’s words: the ESIA process was being undertaken during the municipal electoral campaign and the Mayor explained that he ‘*would not be able to do the job properly as people would think I am campaigning*’ (Mayor, Séguénéga, interview on 11.12.2012). In other words, in different circumstances, he would have been willing to join the meetings, and indeed, tellingly the *préfet* and the SG did ride to the mining villages in the municipal vehicle, rather than the *préfet*’s car. In his remark, the Mayor emphasised that attending the meeting would have represented disloyal political competition on his part. Here it does not matter to know whether this is the ‘true motive’ or not. What is interesting here is that the strained relation between municipal councillors and shaft owners allows politicians ‘to play the electoral game’.

Secondly, the competing relation between municipal councillors and shaft owners gave credence to the electoral arena is through connections between municipal and national-level politics. Municipal elections in 2012 took place at a time when a political split started to ferment at national level party politics within the *Congrès pour la Démocratie et le Progrès* (CDP), the political majority. The split divided supporters of the current president, Blaise Compaoré in power since 1987, and CDP candidate for the upcoming 2015 elections. The current Mayor in Séguénéga supported the former camp. In Séguénéga, early signs of this split were felt during this coupled municipal and legislative electoral campaign.

In 2006, the candidacy of the current Mayor had been materially and politically supported by a powerful politician Mayor in the capital city, but for the second round of elections this politician decided to withdraw his support (Mayor of Séguénéga, Séguénéga, interview on 11.11.2012). Instead, the patron decided to support another CDP candidate, also running for the municipal office in Séguénéga. In this sense, the 2012 municipal electoral campaign in Séguénéga was characterised by a bi-cephalous CDP frontmanship, opposing the current Mayor, who acquired a new political patron, and his contestant, a candidate now supported by the current Mayor's old political patron.¹²⁷ In addition to being a politician, the contestant is also a member of the family of the president of a high-profile human rights organisation in Burkina. At the time of the ESIA study, this organisation took on the mission of carrying the voices of residents from gold mining villages likely to become dispossessed from their resources through the mining project. In this context, the strained relation between municipal councillors and shaft owners became a political asset for the contestant, and thereby also, for the democratic field. The last section furthers the analysis of political contestations that played out during consultations and returns specifically to the

¹²⁷ The reasons for this were unclear at the time, but an examination of press reports upon returning from the field proved that the Mayor who had supported the candidacy of the Mayor in Séguénéga opposed the latter's support to Blaise Compaoré. Indeed a political struggle unfolded in 2013 that divided those supporting Compaoré and those who did not, and an important number of politicians among the latter group stepped down from their function, and the Mayor in Ouagadougou was one of them (LePays on 10.04.2013: <http://www.lefaso.net/spip.php?article53687>; NewOuaga on 13.12.2013: <http://news.aouaga.com/h/3639.html>; Burkina24 on 14.12.2013: <http://burkina24.com/news/2013/12/14/arrondissement-4-de-ouaga-anatole-bonkougou-a-demissionne-du-cdp/>). The latter formed his own party in February 2014 (see Bayiri on 26.02.2014: <http://bayiri.com/politique/partis-politiques/anatole-bonkougou-victime-politique-mais-lecons-mal-assimilees.html>)

significance of autonomy as a specific terrain upon which relations of recognition between competing institutions unfold and reproduces the relevance of the state under democratic decentralisation.

Boycotting the COSIC, claiming autonomy

In this last section I analyse a surprising turn of event whereby both shaft owners and municipal councillors, despite growing competition and confrontations, both came through compromise through the mobilisation of autonomy and decentralisation frameworks. The contestant was seldom on the ground, but a representative for the human rights association was the schoolteacher in Bakou, undertook active consultations with the populations in Bakou and surrounding villages. At the heart of the matter at the time was the presidency of the consultation committee (*Comité de Suivi Inter-Communal*, COSIC) that was being put in place to coordinate consultations between AMARA and those affected by the project including the commune of Séguénéga and two adjacent communes. That position seemed to allow some guarantee of elections at the head of the municipality. As a way to set up the committee, a meeting was organised in Séguénéga despite the opposition in mining villages that effectively boycotted it. This meeting was essentially to also determine who should be at the head of this committee and it seemed that while the current mayor was the obvious candidate, the schoolteacher also aspired to that post: *‘the mayor is everywhere, he is the head of a local organisation as well as that of the municipal council, there has to be some changeover*. As the schoolteacher had worked in Bakou, the heart of resistance, he knew shaft owners well, and vice versa, and he undertook to meet with them several times to *‘try and find solutions for them. They feel abandoned, they do not know who to talk to’* (School teacher, Bakou, interview on 25.12.2012). The schoolteacher was effectively closer to shaft owners than the current mayor on the ground.

While municipal councillors feared that *‘shaft owners were getting manipulated by politicians’* (mayor, Séguénéga, interview on 25.12.2012), this was not necessarily the case. In December 2012, several meetings took place between shaft owners among five of the 13 villages affected by the industrial mining project. The schoolteacher attended many of these meetings. After one of them, shaft owners warned that the

schoolteacher *'was not playing straight because he was involved in politics'* (shaft owners, Bakou, group interview on 26.12.2012). In this sense while the issue had become politicised, the shaft owners were well aware of this and they did not undertake to follow the schoolteacher as a result.

I was not able to meet with the contestant and while the schoolteacher only acknowledged working for the human rights organisation he was representing, the mayor was clear about the alignment of the teacher with his opponent and his potential aspiration to the head of the committee. At the same time he did not understand what the shaft owners expected of him exactly:

'What they ask is unreasonable because nobody ever saw any municipal authorities being able to stop a mine from going ahead, the authorisation comes from above, the municipality does not have the power to stop it. They say that I made deals, that I sold their hill, but it is ridiculous there were exploration permits well before I even thought about becoming mayor of Séguénéga...'

Mayor, Séguénéga, interview on 25.12.2012

Asked whether he thought the construction of the mine was a good thing, the mayor acknowledged the difficult implications of the creation of the mine:

'I explained to AMARA that it will be difficult for them [shaft owners] because all families in Séguénéga live thanks to the gold, all the buildings, all the commerce, all that comes from the orpaillage, if there is no more orpaillage, the economy will be difficult, a lot of them are going to turn into bandits, so I told them [AMARA] that there really needs to be some jobs for people in the area, I even went to ask the Mayor in Sabce [where another mine was created one year earlier] for some advice'

Mayor, Séguénéga, interview on 15.05.2012

In other words, the mine will create some problems related to unemployment, but it also will create rents that the shaft owners never provided, and it is in this sense that *'their demands are unreasonable'*. This is not to suggest that the Mayor's only interest is in enhancing the municipal budget, nor that he is systematically aligned with those of the central state. Rather, what this Chapter has shown is that in a context where *orpaillage* has generated wealth and empowered individuals at the margins of the law, it has also become impossible for local governments to integrate the activity in everyday governance. In a context where municipal councillors are encouraged to

‘fend for themselves’ and where state transfers are poor, the underlying governance logic is one of a quest for autonomy.

The COSIC therefore continued to be put in place, and while the Mayor of Séguénéga, along with those of two other municipalities affected by the project. Shaft owners continued to resist. They claimed: *‘If we participate in consultations, it means that we have accepted the mine’* (shaft owner, Bakou, interview on 26.12.2012). The mayor became re-elected, and the shaft owners’ fight was picked up by another organisation, this time led by an autochthon from the neighbouring village of Gambo. Their organisation has filed several complaints to AMARA with very specific grievances related to the process in which consultation was being led.

The municipal councillors-cum-shaft owners in Gambo sent an application to the provincial authority (*Haut Commissaire*) towards the erection of a new municipal circumscription with the village of Gambo as its capital. This demand had been made several times before without avail, while this particular demand was met by a considerate response by the central administration (see figure below).

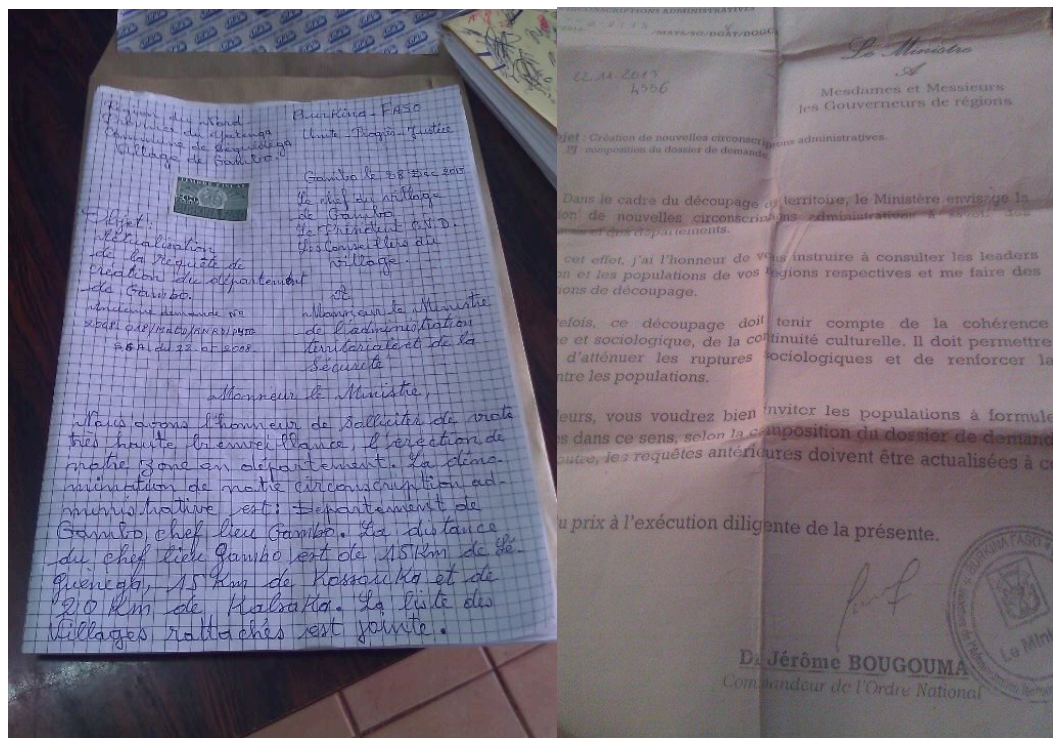


Figure 8. Correspondence between municipal councillors in Gambo and the Ministry of Territorial Administration (source: courtesy of Tasseré Sawadogo)

Municipal councillors did not oppose this demand in Séguénéga because it would support an application for Séguénéga to become a province.¹²⁸ If their demands are successful, the council of Séguénéga will no longer have to deal with shaft owners, while the latter will have become entitled to a material share to the mine's rents through the superficiary tax. In a newspaper article commenting on the opposition to the industrial mining project the head of the SCO carrying forward the project commented that:

'We reject the COSIC [comité de Suivi Inter-Communal] that was set up [...] we think that decentralisation commands that every administrative entity contributes to its own development. In Gambo we are fully carrying out this task. As has been pointed out by the village chief, the discovery of gold on the hill of Gambo has allowed the population to realise the following without a single help from the state: a rural health post, a highschool [Collège d'Enseignement Général] is currently being finalised [...], similarly the primary school B has benefitted from three new classes, we also re-built the village market. All this has been done without a single contribution either from the central government or from the municipality Séguénéga. Thus, we ask that GAMBO be designated as an independent rural commune without delay, a demand that has been formally made since 2005 to the Ministry [Ministère de l'Administration Territoriale et de la Sécurité] for ten years now'

¹²⁸ L'Opinion, 5 au 11 Juin 2013 (see: <http://www.zedcom.bf/hebdo/op815/3.php>)

What is interesting here is that the rejection of the COSIC, and more importantly the demand by the village of Gambo to become administratively recognised as an autonomous commune justified on the grounds that shaft owners have fulfilled their role as elected representatives. While it is unclear whether their demand will be approved, the fact that it has been made at all is relevant. Unlike Gambo, Bakou is too small a village to be able to apply to become an independent commune. However it is quite possible that if the demand is followed up by the central administration, Bakou should become part of the commune of Gambo. A compromise seems to have been reached in the democratic field, momentarily, through the politics of autonomy.

Conclusion

Overall this Chapter has analysed the relevance of democratic decentralisation reform for citizens, from below. Analysing the kind of ideas about the state that are produced and shared out of the way institutions of power compete and collaborate in the exercise of public authority over the production of gold resources at the margins of the law. In both parts of this Chapter, I mobilise the concept of the field to analyse these relations. The concept of political field is useful here to operationalize a conceptualisation of state formation as a result of relations, rather than the configuration of political power and economic resources that emerge from a given resource-authority nexus.

In the case presented above, I support this argument through a two-step analysis. The first part of the Chapter analyses the idea produced out of the everyday relations between municipal councillors and shaft owners. I show that ‘governmental rationality’ of decentralisation significantly departs from practice: on the one hand, municipal councillors attempt to levy taxes over an illegal activity, and on the other, illegal shaft owners levy taxes in the name of decentralisation, which they do not share with the wider municipal community. In other words, institutions of power collaborate and compete in the field of decentralisation in a way that largely spills

¹²⁹ <http://www.lefaso.net/spip.php?article55110>

over the edges of ‘governmental rationality’. More specifically, what is significant is that a fragmented political field is produced out of these relations, and the line that divides this fragmentation is the struggle for autonomy.

The second part of the argument draws upon an analysis of the ways in which this political field is reconfigured upon the entry of an additional institution of power, namely a foreign mining investor, which changes the political and economic stakes of autonomy. For municipal councillors, the investor constitutes an opportunity to enhance both political and economic autonomy, while the prospects of shaft owners are grimmer. What is analysed however is not the reconfigurations of political and economic stakes as such, but rather the idea that is produced and shared out of the relations how the relations between institutions of power differ as the stakes have transformed. Here again, we see that autonomy is an idea that is produced and shared in the democratic field despite contentious relations. As the struggle for autonomy accommodates competing interests, it also provides a wider range of institutions of power access to government, and thereby, contributes to state formation.

It could be argued that autonomy operates like a discourse, in the Foucauldian sense, which emerges out of the political control over knowledge about resource production that subjectifies particular resource producers (shaft owners) whose interests clash with those of the central government. This may well be the case – after all, the mobilisation of decentralisation by shaft owners does not result in putting a halt to the mining project, and it may be argued that they in fact become subjectified to statutory frameworks through this very mobilisation; however here I seek to turn this conceptualisation on its head. Instead of seeing autonomy as a form of governmental rationality that is discursively imposed and appropriated so that government has better access to ‘resource and population’, I rather present it as an idea that is produced out of the relations between various institutions of power, like shaft owners, and through which they can get better access to government. In the following Chapter I also mobilise the concept of field to illustrate the way decentralisation contributes to state formation through the politics of autonomy in the case of forest resources in Séguénéga.

Chapter 8. *Tiis nanamse* in the democratic field

In Chapter Five I showed that a dual regulatory regime emerged in Burkina where small-scale producers extracting woodfuel outside community-based woodfuel concessions enjoy greater autonomy over the regulation of extraction. In Chapter Six I showed that this level of autonomy from the central government translates into the emergence of *tiis nanamse* as a significant institution of power working alongside the forest agent to regulate woodfuel access in Sima and adjacent villages. The authority of *tiis nanamse* has emerged and been maintained out of the relation between the forest agent and customary authorities. However like the case of shaft owners, the authority that *tiis nanamse* are able to exercise is also limited. In this Chapter I analyse the ways in which they become enrolled in decentralisation and the relation they entertain with overlapping municipal councillors as a result.

I operationalize the notion of field to demonstrate the way the politics of autonomy contributes to dynamics of state formation under decentralisation. As in the previous Chapter, the dimension of weak states tackled here is related to the fact that reforms devised and inscribed in policy are never quite fully rolled out in practice. As elaborated in Chapter Two this is often explained as either a manifestation of the ‘erosion of the state’ when decentralisation advocacies and reforms are imposed ‘from outside’, for example by International Financial Institutions and INGOs; or as a ‘repertoire of domination’ in view of the fact that central governments have retained crucial powers and resources that keep local governments from carrying out their mandate. However in this thesis, state formation is not conceptualised as the result of reforms seen as a ‘technology of rule’ imposed from above, but as a ‘political field’, and specifically as the product of the relations between institutions of power playing within this field. In this Chapter I analyse the idea that is produced and competed over by overlapping institutions of power over forest resources in the field of decentralisation.

The processes through which institutions of power come to compete and collaborate for the exercise of public authority over forest resources is very different from the way they do in the case of gold resources. Like shaft owners, *tiis nanamse* also become enrolled in the democratic field ‘in the name of decentralisation’ but unlike

them, the ‘democratic field’ does not emerge ‘organically’, but through the way central government and donors compete over the definition of the democratic field.

The first part of this Chapter analyses the idea that is produced out of this relationship. Specifically, I show that autonomy emerges as a compromise between the divergent objectives of central government and donors over the motivation to implement ‘forest decentralisation’, and materialises in the choice to decentralise forest resources by transferring municipal oversight on forest resources to a civil society association, which, in Séguénéga, results in the mobilisation of *tiis nanamse* in the ‘democratic field’ through the creation of Forest User Committees (FUCs). The second part of this Chapter analyses the way institutions of power collaborate and compete for authority over forest within the democratic field thus defined. I analyse the ways in which the relations between institutions of power over forest resources are being reconfigured under a donor-funded project aiming to create ‘municipal forests’ in Séguénéga. Specifically, the municipal forests give rise to an overlaying of political fields. *Tiis nanamse* are being empowered through FUCs and bring the customary field in the forest with them. Municipal councillors also become able to claim benefits from the forest, but the bureaucratic field is maintained as the right to issue permits over woodcutting remain firmly held by the central government, represented by the forest agent on the ground. Like municipal councillors, the FUC now has the imperative to become autonomous, and a politics of autonomy emerges between them. Interestingly however, this politics is expressed within the terrain of contested customary boundaries. The Chapter concludes with an analysis of this conflict and shows that as *tiis nanamse* have entered the democratic field they are able to make territorial claims, and this is how, through the politics of autonomy, decentralisation contributes to state formation.

Forest decentralisation: ‘zones of conservation’ and a role for donors

The *Code Général des Collectivités Territoriales* that frames the kind and extent of powers transferred to local governments in Burkina provisions for the transfer of responsibilities and rights over 11 domains but these are mostly nominal (CGCT 2004). Within the ‘environment and natural resource management’ domain, the delivery of woodcutting permits is one of the seven responsibilities that municipal councillors ought to acquire over time. In practice however the ability for municipal councillors to collect taxes over woodfuel production depends on the adoption by central government of an application decree that redefines the fiscal nomenclature over woodfuel taxes, and this decree has not yet been adopted (Kabré et al. 2009, 29). Municipalities are allowed to raise their own revenue through local taxes but this only refers to resources that are not already under central control (IUCN 2011, 28). This means that the central administration has not yet transferred fiscal powers to municipalities that will allow them to become financially autonomous through the governance of forest resources.

According to the *Code Général des Collectivités Territoriales* (CGCT 2004, art. 89) the delivery of timber and woodfuel permits by municipal authorities may be possible if they create ‘zones of conservation’ in their commune (2004, art. 90). The procedure to create and classify these zones of conservation is costly.¹³⁰ It has been clarified in a recent document that has been distributed to forest agents on the ground (MECV 2010), but the latter are not particularly encouraged to provide their assistance. The classification of zones of conservation requires a burdensome procedure including extensive local consultations with forest users, while compensation for the work of forest agents is left at the discretion of local governments. The latter are not willing to give away scarce resources, and forest agents are unwilling to participate in the creation of these zones for free, especially given that they are underfunded and under-equipped (Dié 2011, 52). This state of affairs echoes the ‘repertoires of domination’ described by Poteete and Ribot (2011) in Botswana and Senegal, where central administrations are also resisting power and resource transfers for elected

¹³⁰ To date these ‘zones of conservation’, have only been created in two places, in Méguet and Sablogo that have benefitted from the support of international donors (Tapsoba 2012, 14). In these cases however municipalities have not yet been transferred the powers provisioned in the CGCT.

governments to be able to govern the management of natural resources. However here what is emphasised is not that decentralisation makes a difference through ability of local governments to actually become autonomous, but rather through the kind of politics that unfolds as they try to become so.

In a context where central government resist devolving fiscal powers, the creation of zones of conservation relies entirely on external funding, and the way the 'local is mobilised' shapes the conditions under which municipal authorities may become autonomous (Hagberg 2010, Ribot et al. 2010).¹³¹ In Burkina, a couple of international NGOs have stepped in. They are convinced of the local environmental, economic and social benefits to be gained from the reform, and have become involved in pushing it as far as the law permits, and with the objective of '*proving the value of municipalities to the central administration*' (IUCN national coordinator, February 2012). In this context the role of donors is crucial in the way the local is mobilised. More importantly the way the 'local is mobilised' emerges from the overlapping authority of donors and central government about the right way to undertake decentralisation. In order to understand how autonomy becomes a significant dimension of the relations that play out in the field of decentralisation, we must first examine competing claims of authority between donors and central administration, through the way their rationalities compete and coalesce over the significance of autonomy in the forest sector.

Empowering civil society

In a context where the law is partial, decentralisation is not legally determined. It is the product of hard choices and compromises made between central government and donors. For central administration actors, the shift towards decentralisation is useful in that it helps legitimising the law. Participatory approaches to natural resource management in the 1990s have led to a proliferation of localised, un-coordinated and short-lived projects. According to Ministry of Environment staff, the plurality of

¹³¹ Central government resistance happens despite the fact that national budgetary guidelines provision for the creation of these zones to be funded by the state (50%), the municipal council budget (40%) and donors (10%). A number of forests are currently under 'participatory management' projects, all also externally funded, but these are not mentioned here because these projects are not carried out 'in the name of decentralization, unlike in Méguet and Sablogo.

institutions has undermined any sense of ‘responsibility’ over the management of resources, as the General Director of Forests put it:

‘Participatory approaches were useful, and they are not over, but we need mechanisms, so that if something fails, somebody can be held responsible [...] this can only happen if we have an institutional environment that encourages local resource users to take their responsibilities towards the environment. [...] Development is like a factory, you know, like a mechanism with gears [engrenage]; if you press a button you get a result, we just need to find the right gears that will result in what we want to achieve.’

Ministry of Environment staff, Ouagadougou, interview on 22.02.2012

Decentralising oversight over forest resources to local governments rather than civil society groups is seen as the ‘right gear’ that enhances resource users’ ‘sense of responsibility’. The difference with earlier participatory approaches is slight but important: while participatory approaches responded to the problem of grassroots exclusion by excess of central control, decentralisation addresses the issue of uncontrolled and unaccountable grassroots management and a lack of administrative oversight. In other words, transferring oversight of grassroots management to elected governments seems an ideal ‘mechanism’ to legitimise legal frameworks and statutory oversight over the production of forest resources.

Donors share the ideal that decentralisation is useful to bring ‘legitimacy and legality’ closer together, but their normative stance towards the role of decentralisation as a way to enhance the legitimacy of legal frameworks is somewhat different. According to them, supporting decentralisation is necessary to provide local resource users an incentive to protect their resources. This is based on the idea that current centralised control over forest resources acts as a disincentive for users to invest in the protection of the resources they use. One of the INGO staff describes how they got involved in supporting the decentralisation reform in Burkina:

‘We had been involved in local initiatives related with the commercialisation of Non-Timber Forest Producers for a long time, but forestry is a long-term investment, the resources are scarce, and pretty quickly the beneficiaries brought a question right back to us saying, ‘well why should we invest [in the protection of natural resources] if we’re not sure that the resource belongs to us, that we have no exclusive rights over it, that we cannot control how it is managed?’ So we decided to get involved in

making sure that the rights of access are in the hands of the villagers, that the structures at the village level are in their hands rather than being superseded or topped by some central administration, and decentralisation is a systematic way to do that'

INGO international programme director, Skype, interview on 07.11.2012

Unlike Ministry of Environment staff, the lack of central oversight is part of the problem, and not part of the solution that decentralisation may bring. The view of donors echoes previous participatory approaches, but it differs in that a 'systematic' approach is now sought. At the same time, certain distance must be kept with administration:

'Our vision is that the municipal council is not so much the power-holder as the facilitator. We don't want to see in future a municipal forest service that takes the place of forest agent in terms of controlling access and revenues; this should be the role of local Forest User Committees'

INGO international programme director, Skype, interview on 07.11.2012

Examining the rationales underlying forest decentralisation is important to show that relations of recognition are not legally determined but rather result from multiple rationalities and hard compromise work between central administration and donors. Specifically analysing the ways in which rationalities about decentralisation are shared or compete brings to light the idea of autonomy as an underlying core principle that informs how 'the local should be mobilised'. Below I show that this principle significantly shapes the way overlapping institutions of power, such as *tiis nanamse* and municipal authorities, relate on the ground in the field of decentralisation. The rest of the Chapter returns to Séguénéga and analyses the kind of idea that is produced as the decentralisation reform becomes appropriated through a donor intervention. Interestingly, the idea of autonomy brings together *tiis nanamse* and donors around the creation of a Forest User Committee. Indeed, in order for a Forest User Committee to be found, appropriate individuals must come forward and *tiis nanamse* 'naturally' emerge as 'power-holders' to constitute a Forest User Committee. Below I examine how the relation between *tiis nanamse* and municipal authorities transforms as a result.

In the name of decentralisation: finding a Forest User Committee in Séguénéga

There are only two international Non-Governmental Organisations explicitly supporting forest management in the name of decentralisation in Burkina Faso. Séguénéga is currently benefitting from one of them, which has worked with eight municipalities since 2007 throughout the country. This on-going project is funded by bilateral donor cooperation and it aims to support the process of decentralisation over forest resources through the creation of ‘zones of conservation’, or ‘municipal forests’, as it is described in the project, in the communes that it supports. In Séguénéga, a diagnostic study was undertaken with municipal councillors to identify suitable areas for the creation of municipal forests. Two areas were identified and after numerous local consultation meetings with residents in these villages within these areas, the villages willing to participate in the project were asked to form committees. Each forest would be overseen its own Forest User Committee (FUC), so two FUCs were created, each encompassing seven and twelve villages.

The FUCs elaborates a local by-law called a ‘local convention’ with the support from municipal councillors and a local project facilitator hired by the NGO for the duration of the project. As a by-law, local conventions inscribe practices allowed and forbidden within these areas. It also inscribes the sanctions or fines, associated with infractions, and the ways these fines are shared between the FUC, the municipality and the forest agent. Once the municipal council validates the local conventions, the FUCs can start applying the rules inscribed in them. In the commune of Séguénéga, one local convention was elaborated for each ‘municipal forest’.

Local committees and by-laws are often analysed as typical ‘technologies of rule’ aimed to impose a particular ‘project of rule’. Drawing on governmentality concepts, the argument is made that these technologies of rule are more concerned with making resource use legible and controllable by the state, rather than with ‘improving livelihoods’. Here I build upon these insights while suggesting that an examination of the way these technologies are appropriated and the relations of recognition they give rise to, better accounts for the particular politics that emerges on the ground. They

inform us about the way the democratic field plays out, and how the relevance of law is enhanced as a result.

As seen above, one significant way in which decentralisation unfolds is a product of the relation between central administration and donors, which reveals the significance of autonomy. Donors have emerged as a significant institution of power over forest in the field of decentralisation because it makes decisions about the way the ‘local is mobilised’ (Hagberg 2010). However, the kind of politics that emerges is better illuminated through the way the choices of donors are appropriated. Here I show that the principle of autonomy as embodied in these ‘technologies of rule’ shapes the relation that *tiis nanamse* entertain with municipal councillors. In other words, it is not the technology itself that mediates relations between institutions of powers on the ground, but more specifically, the principle of autonomy as an idea that is shared as competing institutions of power relate on the ground.

FUCs: tiis nanamse in the democratic field

The procedure followed by the NGO for the creation of a municipal forest differs slightly from government guidelines (MECV 2006; MECV 2010), and this is partly because the latter were published after the project started; however, it also reflects the tension between donors and central administration described in the previous section. Government guidelines do not require municipalities to create village and inter-village FUCs. Rather, the guidelines advocate that CVDs elaborate a local land by-law similar to that of the Local Convention, called ‘*charte foncière*’ (MECV 2010).¹³²

¹³² These ought to be distinguished from the ‘*chartes foncières*’, another by-law used to clarify local land rights that has been authorised in application of the recent and much praised land law (034-2009/AN portant regime foncier rural, 16th June 2009). Unlike the Local Convention, whose application and conditions of validation are not specified in any legal text, an application decree of the 034 law specifies that the *chartes* must be validated by the municipal council and transmitted to the Provincial level authority (Haut-Commissaire) in order to be applicable (Decree no. 2010-400/PRES/PM/MAHRH/ MRA/MECV/MEF/MA TD portant modalités d’élaboration et de validation des *chartes foncières* locales. In the externally funded interventions supporting the decentralisation of forest resources that I refer to here, Local Conventions were mobilised as a tool rather than the *chartes foncière* because the start of their intervention pre-dates the Land law. In addition the local conventions have been validated and applied in a similar way to the *chartes*, and so the fact that the Convention, rather than the *chartes* was used as a tool is not seen as relevant. Government guidelines then envision that an agreement be signed between the CVDs and municipal council with local socio-professional organisations (woodcutters, NTFP producers and the like), which are contracted out the management of the forest. The latter must hire a forest technician for a management plan to be elaborated (MECVD 2010). However since these

However instead of drawing on CVDs at village-level, the NGO encouraged the creation of committees for each village involved, which, together, would form two inter-village committees, or FUCs. Choosing to create FUCs is quite typical of donor interventions in developing countries since the 1990s. Here however this choice responds specifically to the double imperative of transferring power to local resource users on the one hand, and on the other hand, doing so in a way that the structure operates autonomously from government-sanctioned fields namely, the bureaucratic and the democratic fields. While this may to risk antagonising the relation of newly-created FUCs to existing institutions of power locally, below I show that the rationale of autonomy brings them together in ways that enhance the relevance of the democratic field.

This is most significant in the ways that the creation of FUCs affects the relation between *tiis nanamse* and municipal authorities. Firstly, empowering FUCs, instead of CVDs, locates decision-making power away from the municipal council (Ministry of Environment staff, Ouagadougou, interview on 22.02.2012).¹³³ A municipal councillor in Séguénéga noted that *'the role of the CVD is to make propositions to the FUC, and it becomes an arbitrator in case the FUC comes into conflict with another party'* (municipal councillor, Séguénéga, interview on 17.11.2011). In effect, this means that FUCs have the role of a counter-power to municipal administration; they are meant to operate autonomously from municipal councillors. For municipal councillors, this institutional layering is not problematic since the project is carried out in the name of decentralisation and effectively responds to their imperative to become more autonomous. Specifically, the fact that CVDs are toppled is not necessarily an issue for municipal councillors since the latter have authority over the former.¹³⁴

associations generate little revenue in general, in practice this concession scenario is unlikely to happen without state or donor financial support. The intervention did not get as far as the elaboration of management plans at the time of fieldwork and this process was not observed.

¹³³ Another option would have been to create a new commission within the CVD bureaux specialised in environmental and development affairs (Decree no. 2007- 032/PRES/PM/MATD portant organisation, composition et fonctionnement des Conseils Villageois de Développement (CVD), article 7), but donors did not consider it. It is not clear whether this choice was motivated by the fact that CVD were not entirely constituted in all the villages at the time the intervention started or because this choice reflects the vision of the NGO about the fact that power-holders should be separate from the administration.

¹³⁴ Decree no. 2007- 032/PRES/PM/MATD *portant organisation, composition et fonctionnement des Conseils Villageois de Développement* (articles 9 -13).

Secondly, choosing to work with a FUC rather than CVDs effectively results in empowering *tiis nanamse*. As noted in Chapter Four, a common practice to constitute village-level committees, like the CDR at the time of the revolution or the CVD, is to appoint representatives for each family lineage living in a given village. In this case *‘two individuals were chosen from each ward (saka) but these individuals must not be CVD and they were chosen because they have a particular interest in the bush’* (CVD representative, Sima, interview on 29.01.2012). By virtue of the fact that *tiis nanamse* are the village-level ‘bush experts’ FUC committees are generally made up of the *tiis nanamse*. It may happen that *tiis nanamse* are also CVD representatives, and this was true in the cases of two village-level FUCs. Importantly, the fact that *tiis nanamse*’s authority is fragile, as a twilight institution, means that being recognised is a welcome opportunity. As such, donors and *tiis nanamse* meet one another over the imperative of autonomy.

For donors, this institutional layering between *tiis nanamse* and the FUC is invisible, but it is not necessarily problematic. Donors did not explicitly encourage *tiis nanamse* to become the power-holders because they lack the historical depth of understanding about local authority over forest resources to be aware that such a group virtually exists but it is not necessarily problematic. What is important at the end of the day is that forest users feel they are adequately represented through FUC committees. Members of CVD and FUC committees were unanimous on the point that this latter additional structure was useful because *‘CVD representatives cover many issues, but they do not specialise in issues related to the bush, but with the FUC the bush can be better protected’* (CVD representative, Doussaré, interview on 02.04.2012).

As seen in Chapter Five, one corollary of being an institution of power operating ‘at the twilight’ is that *tiis nanamse* require further recognition of their authority, and the principle of autonomy carried forth by donors converges with the need for *tiis nanamse* to be further recognised. In the words of the *tiis naaba* who is also the FUC president of the ‘municipal forest’ of Sima, the project *‘comes to strengthen the work that we did before’* (FUC president, Sima, interview on 15.04.2012). Project beneficiaries consider that since this intervention tackles the management of natural

resources, it is only natural that the individuals brought forward for this project are the *tiis nanamse*, because they have a certain expertise in the domain of natural resource management. Granting *tiis nanamse* the status of a state-sanctioned institution of power in the forest also holds the promise to resolve dilemmas of ‘impractical laws’ for the forest agent and resource users.¹³⁵ As seen in Chapter Five, limited enforcement capacities is an issue for the forest agent, and the fact that an FUC is created unloads some of his (state-sanctioned) responsibilities.

The empowerment of *tiis nanamse* via the FUC ‘in the name of decentralisation’ gives relevance to the ‘democratic field’ in the forest. Autonomy is an underlying principle through which the interests between various institutions of power converge, and it frames the relevance and persistence of the democratic field in the forest. As autonomy forms an imperative for a variety of competing institutions of power, it has made a space for the democratic field to emerge. However it also transforms the ‘structure of opportunity’ for these institutions of power to collaborate and compete. In order to understand how this structure of opportunity changes, we must examine how the rules and relations between these institutions of power are transformed through the local conventions adopted ‘in the name of decentralisation’. Below I show that these effectively re-configure powers over forest resources in a way that realises the vision of autonomy laid out by donors, albeit away from the bureaucratic field controlled by the forest agent. Yet it also creates a fragmented democratic field where *tiis nanamse*, who have now become FUCs, compete with municipal councillors over the benefits to be had from ‘municipal forests’. The exercise of public authority over the production of woodfuel illuminates that tension and is developed below.

Structures of opportunity: rules and relations

Everything but woodfuel: the imperative of autonomy for FUCs

To begin with, it is important to note that the tasks handed over to the FUCs do not withdraw the role of the forest agent, and therefore does not challenge the government as an institution of power. Indeed the latter continues to oversee the distribution of

¹³⁵ I realise that for this analysis to be complete, more work needs to be done on the role of woodcutters as an institution of power, and this has been acknowledged in Chapter Three.

woodfuel and timber permits, a task that was not transferred to the FUCs since there is yet no application decree pertaining this fiscal transfer to municipalities. In this sense, and since *tiis nanamse* mainly draw their legitimacy from customary authorities, the FUC layers the customary field over the bureaucratic field.

It was too early to see them applied in practice, but an examination of the politics unfolding around the formulation of rules inscribed in the local conventions illuminates the significance of autonomy as a fundamental principle underlying the way institutions of power collaborate and compete in the municipal forest, and contribute to the relevance of law. Fundamentally, the rules contained in the local conventions are generic and do not change very much from the way that resources were used before. They were elaborated during participatory meetings and based on practices identified by project beneficiaries as ‘degrading the bush’. Interestingly the practices identified in these two meetings conducted with the two FUCs were not only identical in both places, but were also enumerated in exactly the same order (see Figure 9).

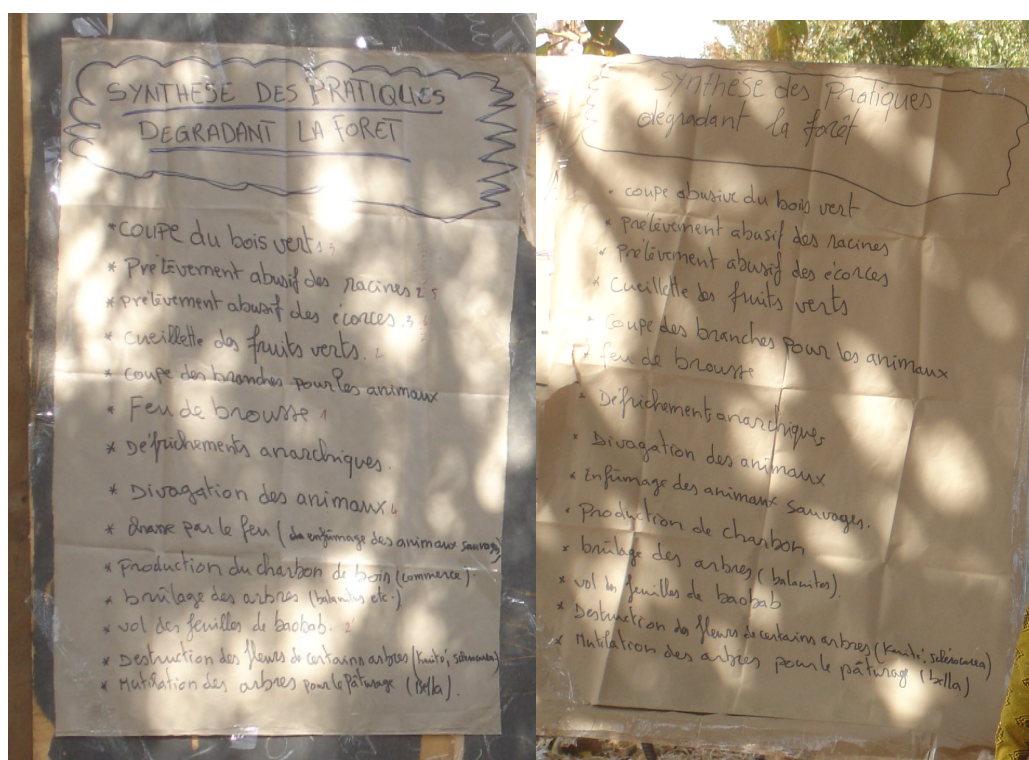


Figure 9. Practices identified as degrading the forest’ in both Sima and Teonso in October 2011 (source: courtesy of the local NGO facilitator kept anonymous)

The point here is not to show that the project fails on its own terms, as the rules elaborated better reflect the wisdom of the local project facilitator than that of beneficiaries – it is a typical standardising effect of these types of ‘technologies of rule’ (see also Nightingale 2005). Rather, what is emphasised here is that the fact that the rules reinforce the status quo prior to the creation of ‘municipal forests’: on the one hand, this is useful because it means that they will be accepted by all, as business as usual, on the other hand, this undermines the relevance of FUCs.

The rules elaborated within the local conventions are also those that are provisioned within statutory frameworks but generally ignored by state forest agents because they are difficult to enforce. For example those caught setting bushfires are charged with a fine of CFA 5,000 (GBP 6) by the FUC. This means that FUCs are now handed over a difficult task that brings them in opposition with forest users. Considering they have less enforcement capacity than the forest agent, it is unlikely that they will try to enforce these rules. The inapplicability of rules makes the FUCs redundant.

In addition, other forbidden practices are rules already applied. For example, local conventions forbid the commercial production of charcoal, whereas this activity is not undertaken in the area anyway. Another example is that local conventions sanctions the collection of valuable Non Timber Forest Products, such as shea fruits, before they mature, but this is generally frowned upon and sanctioned informally (elder woman, Sima, interview on 08.05.2012).

Interestingly, the topic of woodfuel regulation is not included in the local conventions because it is considered ecologically risky to devolve this power to either the FUC or municipal authorities, but this is ironically significant. The head of the project in Britain explained that this topic was not considered because of the scarce forest resources in that area (compared to those further south) and that is why the focus of local conventions has been on NTFPs. The donors are concerned that *‘the communes would be in a logic of maximising profit with the extraction of woodfuel, and they would stop caring for their resources’* (INGO international programme director, Skype, interview on 07.11.2012). The irony is that the local conventions aims

precisely to create rules that address the causes of environmental degradation perceived by local resource users, and the inadequacy of the woodfuel legislation in place is precisely what is perceived to be the creating the woodfuel problem. As seen in Chapter Six, the impracticality of the rule of law pertaining woodcutting permits is precisely what local forest users perceive to be an important cause of ecological degradation.

According to the NGO staff the option to devolve authority and fiscal powers over woodfuel to the FUC is not excluded. The NGO considers itself a facilitator rather than the ‘driver’ of change. It is considered that, were the issue of woodfuel important, the institutional structure put in place would naturally work so that the FUC members would take the issue with municipal authorities who would take the necessary steps, the realisation of this depends on ‘*a strong present active FUC, prepared to go to their elected representatives telling them something is not working.*’ (NGO international programme director, Skype, interview on 07.11.2012; forest agent, Séguénéga, interview on 16.04.2012).

Nevertheless, at present, the fact that the devolution of woodfuel is not included in local conventions means that the opportunities to generate revenues by the FUC are poor, and so are its chances of survival once the project funds run out. However the recognition of *tiis nanamse* within the FUC committees reinforces their power, and it allows them to claim further authority over the bush. Specifically, the fact that woodfuel is not included in the local convention gives political autonomy of *tiis nanamse* over forest resources, but undermines their ability to become economically autonomous. Indeed while *tiis nanamse* have become empowered through the creation of the FUC, they now also need to struggle for autonomy.

On the one hand the fact that local convention have not made resource use more restrictive means that the status quo over ‘impractical laws’ is not challenged, and the rules are accepted. On the other hand, the fact that the status quo is not challenged means that the FUCs have little opportunity to generate revenue and to become more autonomous. In order to further understand how institutions of power compete and

collaborate within overlapping bureaucratic and democratic fields, we must pay attention to the way powers are being redistributed in municipal forests.

An uneven democratic (playing) field

It is yet too early to establish the extent to which the FUCs will manage to enforce the rules inscribed in the local convention, but the fact that the FUC was created, and that resources gathered from fines mainly benefit FUCs is certainly an important transformation: it means that the forest agent is no longer the only state-sanctioned institution of power over forest resources. From now on, the FUC and municipal councillors are also legally recognised to oversee resource use. However, the power they are able to respectively exercise is not equal.

Interestingly, the project is being carried out in the name of decentralisation, but the only power in the hands of the municipality is that of validating local conventions, while the FUCs are in charge of making rules contained in the local conventions. An examination of the way powers are distributed among them gives an indication of the fact that local conventions have brought *tiis nanamse* and municipal authorities to compete over their respective autonomy.

The table below sums up the share of revenue that was decided for fines collected over infractions within the ‘municipal forest’. It represents the way resources generated by each institution of power out of the rules inscribed in the local conventions and therefore gives a good indication of the way powers have been redistributed in the municipal forests.

	Inter-village FUC	Village-level FUCs	Municipal council	Forest agent
Sima	35%	50% (12 villages)	10%	5%
Teonsgo	50%	35% (7 villages)	10%	5%

Table 5. Distribution of benefits collected from fines as inscribed in the local conventions of Sima and Teonsgo

The forest agent seems to be the one losing out, but in fact his powers transform in only a minor way. As shown earlier, the rules inscribed in the local convention do not

challenge those already inscribed in law. Before the municipal forests of Sima and Teonsgo were created, the benefits generated by infractions (*'recettes contentieuses'*) were shared between the central administration (70%), the forest agent (21%) and the individual who caught the infraction, effectively the *tiis naaba* (9%) (IUCN 2011, 55). In the case of somebody cutting greenwood for example it is common for the forest agent in Séguénéga to confiscate the law-breaker's axe against a CFA 5,000 (GBP 6) fine. Before the municipal forests were created, forest agents were allowed to perceive CFA 1,050 (GBP 1.25), but now they are only attributed CFA 250 (GBP 0.30).¹³⁶ The extent to which the bureaucratic field is actually undermined is examined in the next section. What is simply emphasised here is that the bureaucratic field has been maintained alongside the democratic field.

At the same time, the creation of municipal forests has also made space for three new types of claimants in the forest: the inter-village and village-level FUCs, and the municipal council. Noteworthy from this table is also the fact that these institutions of power do not have the same 'weight'. This reflects again the donor vision of autonomy, and it is important because this mediates the way institutions of power collaborate and compete over the exercise of public authority over woodfuel in the 'municipal forests'. The municipal council is now able to generate a new income from municipal forests but it is attributed a smaller share than FUCs. This is an improvement from the total absence of own revenues from natural resources previous to the project, but it also means that municipal councillors and *tiis nanamse* turned FUCs are now brought into competition over the benefits generated in the municipal forests. Last but not least, local conventions effectively institutionalise the authority of *tiis nanamse*. What is more, the FUC gathers a significantly greater share of benefits collected from fines on the infractions defined in the local convention.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ It is also noteworthy here is the fact that the central government now perceives almost no share of contentious resources. Given this, it will be interesting to see the extent to which this rule is applied in practice but I do not have data on this because the convention was only just validated at the time of fieldwork.

¹³⁷ The difference between the municipal forests of Sima and Teonsgo reflects the different decisions taken by the FUCs: in Teonsgo, the inter-village FUC (comprising seven villages) receives a greater share than village level FUCs compared to that of Sima (comprising twelve villages). This is to be understood by the fact that the number of villages in the former is smaller and therefore the inter-village FUC requires a greater share of resources in order to be able to function.

Overall here again, apprehending decentralisation as a field, rather than a project of rule reflected in legal provisions or the lack thereof, better helps capture the kinds of relations that unfold under decentralisation, and the kind of idea about the state that is produced out of these relations. Indeed while the lack of legal provisions for power and resource transfers to local governments is certainly a telling aspect of state-building, it is yet an aspect that only sheds light on governmental rationality, and misses the crucial significance of what this lack of power transfer means at the interface between rulers and ruled. In practice, donors have stepped in, and they have rolled out a vision whereby decentralisation ought to empower a civil society association that is autonomous from local administration. This has resulted in the empowerment of *tiis nanamse*, via the FUCs. An examination of the way local conventions redistribute power between the FUC and municipal authorities ‘in the name of decentralisation’ gives an indication of the way *tiis nanamse* and municipal authorities are likely to relate in practice: effectively, the fact that *tiis nanamse* have emerged as FUCs, and the fact that the FUC is suddenly handed most power over forest resources, especially vis-à-vis municipal councillors, is likely to generate tensions between them. Effectively, the idea of autonomy has created new opportunities for collaboration and competition between institutions of power, and below I examine how they play out in practice.

Undermining the bureaucratic field

Interviews carried out with some of the least engaged village-level FUCs reveal that their members were generally disappointed with the project and decided to stop attending the meetings organized by the NGO facilitator.¹³⁸ For them, the fact that woodfuel is not included is a problem because it reinforces the status quo over the way woodfuel is being extracted, and these villages have started disengaging from the project because ‘*it does not change anything*’ (village-level FUC, Doussaré, group interview on 17.04.2012)

This has not escaped the attention of the *tiis nanamse* who are also now FUC presidents. Indeed, once the support of the NGO ends (provisionally in 2014) the

¹³⁸ The way the villages were selected for group interview is explained in Chapter Three.

survival of FUCs is entirely dependent on the revenues they are able to raise. The ability to deliver permits over woodfuel production would be the best opportunity for the FUC to generate revenues, and in the absence of such authorisation, the only opportunity they are left with is from the fines that they are allowed to collect from those who commit infractions, as they are defined in the local conventions, which we have seen, are unlikely to generate any revenue for them.

In order to address these contradictions *tiis nanamse* in charge of FUCs decided to start reviving the rules that had been delineated before. At the end of 2011, the project had been going on for over three years. The conventions were just about to be validated by the municipal council, and the FUC president in Sima called a meeting with the FUCs to decide to apply the two rules about the animal pens and the woodfuel parks (Chapter Six).

As before, most woodcutters still refused to comply but some of them came to pay the tax. A first meeting was called upon, but most of them boycotted it. A second meeting was called upon during which some woodcutters came to pay their share, and a record of these contributions was kept. The participation of some woodcutters at the second meeting is explained by their understanding that '*now the bush is overseen by the FUC president*' (woodcutter, Doussaré, interview on 04.04.2012). In addition, the FUC made the rules more convenient for woodcutters. Seeing that the arrangements for the woodfuel parks were not working, and seeing that FUC members need resources to keep the FUC alive, they decided to deliver woodcutting permits themselves: The woodcutters they intercepted in the forest with a woodcutting permit delivered by the forest agent were told to turn away. From now on, woodcutters ought to acquire a permit with the FUC when they collected wood fuel in the municipal forest.

Some of the woodcutters did pay, but many complained. They addressed their complaints to the forest agent. The latter explained to the FUC presidents that their practice was illegal, and that they must speak with the mayor in charge of the project if they wanted to legalise it. He pointed out that since the municipal forests were created, power over the forest shifted:

‘They [those involved in the project] have told me nothing, even the FUC presidents, they did not come to see me, and even when they started to issue their own permit, the mayor was not aware of that until later. Right now, FUCs are not legal, they do not have formal rights and they start to issue tickets, at least they should approach the mayor so that he can propose a municipal decree to authorise them but there is nothing at the moment. We [forest agents] only execute orders, whereas the municipal authorities make the decisions now!’

Forest agent, Séguénéga, interview on 04.05.2012

It was not possible to fully enquire how municipal authorities perceived these arrangements for ethical reasons.¹³⁹ However the CEDL president, who is the municipal councillor in charge of environment and development issues, was aware of the issues. The latter advised the FUC presidents to *‘go easy with these permits because it might be that the forest agent has a certain amount of money that he must cash every month and show to central authorities, and if the FUC deliver permits they might get him into trouble’* (Fieldnotes on 16.04.2012).

The issue was also raised publicly with the project facilitator during a project meeting for FUC members dedicated to the elaboration of forest management plans; participants explained the confusion they were faced with as to whom they ought to pay woodcutting fees.¹⁴⁰ Whether the Mayor was aware of the situation is not clear; he never indicated so, despite my prompts during an interview and despite two subsequent meetings held in the presence of the FUCs (Fieldnotes on 16.02.2012 and 19.02.2012). The arrangement slowly died out and the status quo over impractical and unenforceable laws was maintained.

What is significant here however is that the principle of autonomy applied by donors granted *tiis nanamse* the power to make these rules. In this context where the autonomy of *tiis nanamse* has been enhanced since they became FUCs, new arrangements are likely to crop up again. Effectively granting autonomy to *tiis nanamse* ‘in the name of decentralisation’ clashed with that of municipal authorities as it is specified in the ‘actually existing’ legislation framing decentralisation. Here

¹³⁹ I was concerned that, although I knew the Mayor was aware of these arrangements, the FUC Presidents would get into trouble if I told him that I was aware of them, because this might have pressured him into taking action against them.

¹⁴⁰ I was not present at the time and my field assistant, hired over the last four months of fieldwork, took notes for me on the issue. The events took place in Séguénéga on 06.07.2012 and 07.03.2012 (see appendix)

we show that autonomy is a fundamental idea that is promulgated and shared by a variety of institutions of power playing out in the field of decentralisation. It configures the relations of recognition between these institutions of power and allows some institutions of power to endure under conditions of weak states. In this section I have shown that, like in the case of gold resources, autonomy is a fundamental idea that brings a variety of institutions of power operating at various scales together in the field of decentralisation. So far, the imperative of autonomy for *tiis nanamse* has undermined the bureaucratic field, but below I examine how the struggle for autonomy that opposes municipal councillors and FUCs enhances the relevance of the rule of law, and thereby contributes to state formation.

Customary politics in the democratic field

In this last section I analyse a case of contentious politics that emerged between FUCs and municipal councillors over the collection of taxes in the new ‘municipal forest’ of Sima. This incident can simply be seen as a typical land conflict emerging in a context of resource scarcity but as the Mayor sharply noted that it was *‘not a problem of land scarcity, but a problem to do with boundaries, and a matter of sensitivities’* (Mayor, Séguénéga, interview on 15.05.2012). Indeed while land pressure over certain areas has increased in recent years, the reason why the issue of boundary is sensitive is not so much to do with anxieties to lose material resources as with those of losing political control over them.

Given the fact that the creation of a municipal forest effectively brought in FUCs and municipal councillors as new claimants, but also competitors in the forest, it is not surprising that a tension emerged between them around the collection of taxes. What is interesting however is that this tension evolved in a way that ended up opposing customary authorities in Sima and Séguénéga, and this ‘slippage’ from the democratic to the customary field is significant. Below I show that the kind of politics that emerged as the FUC and municipal authorities struggled over autonomy in the ‘municipal forest’ of Sima is precisely the type of ‘moment’ in which decentralisation contributes to state formation. In order to understand how this politics of autonomy

unfolds, we must start our analysis from the contested history of boundaries between Sima and Séguénéga.

Contested origins

The name 'Séguénéga' literally means 'squeezed here'. It is a transformation of 'segemde ka' in mooré. Behind the name lays the story of the foundation of the town. However there are two different stories explaining what the name means. As such, there are two different stories about the foundation of the town. The subtle difference between the two stories became a crucial key to understanding the politics that emerged between institutions of power in the 'municipal forests' and the way this kind of politics contributed to state formation.

Seen from the town of Séguénéga, the story underlying the name of Séguénéga goes as such:

'The first to settle here were two brothers. One was single, while the other one was married. They first arrived in Tiba [1km south of Séguénéga]. There was nothing there at the time, so they had to build their own house, which they had to share for a while. But you can imagine that this was only comfortable for so long, so the little brother, the unmarried one, moved out and went to build his own house a few hundred meters away, where Séguénéga is now. This is where the name comes from: it is because they were 'squeezed' in the hut that the little brother had to move and created the town of Séguénéga'

Resident, Séguénéga, interview on 15.05.2012

The elders in Tiba did not add much to this story (elder, Tiba, interview on 11.12.2012). On the other hand, this story is not the only way to explain the origin of the name of Séguénéga. In Sima and Sittigo (elders, Sima, interview on 11.12.2011), I was recounted a different version:

"Séguénéga means 'come and squeeze here'. In the old days there was nothing at all in Séguénéga. But then two brothers came from the bush and asked for a place to stay. At first, they asked the chief in Guibou (a village seven km South of Séguénéga), and he gave them a space on his side of the waterhole. At that time the waterhole that you see today in Séguénéga was the limit between Sima and Guibou. After a while, the people in Guibou became concerned because their horses started dying. They called upon the new comers and asked them why is it that since they have arrived, their

horses started dying. The new comers had come with a snake, and they explained to the chief in Guibou that the totem of the snake is the horse, and that may explain why his horses started to die. After this, the chief in Guibou told them to go a little further out of their territory and they asked the chief in Sima. But the people in Sima also have horses and they did not want them to die. So an arrangement was struck: there was a little piece of land between the territory of Sima and Guibou that belonged to no one, and that is where the new comers were told to settle down. This way they were on no one's territory and the snake could not kill the horses anymore. But the piece of land was very small, so they had to 'squeeze themselves' in there: 'segena ka' "

Village chief, Sima, interview on 21.04.2012

What emerges from these two stories is the fact that from the point of view of Sima and Sittigo, those who settled in Séguénéga came after them, and while the piece of territory they came to occupy is their own, it is also very small. This means that if people in Séguénéga wish to cultivate fields they will need to ask permission from customary authorities in Sima. From the point of view of Séguénéga, this piece of history is irrelevant. It does not mean that they do not acknowledge that there is a boundary between Sima and Séguénéga, but the account above shows that they do not necessarily consider relevant the fact that the territory of Séguénéga is smaller than that of Sima. In order to understand why this discrepancy between the two stories is potentially contentious we need to know that Séguénéga, being the local administrative capital since colonial times when it was created as a sous-prefecture, is significantly larger than Sima. This means that people in Sima have felt they have been encroached upon for a long time.

It is not unusual to find various stories about the creation of towns in Africa, and beyond. Understanding how and why they come to differ is a difficult question to probe. However, the fact that they persist and the way they come to mediate the relations between institutions of power is an important question that can be invoked here. Below I show that the empowerment of *tiis nanamse* in Sima and the effective layering of the customary and democratic fields are giving rise to customary politics in the democratic field, which is articulated around a struggle for autonomy between *tiis nanamse* and municipal authorities, which results in enhancing the relevance of

the rule of law.

FUCs, sand taxes and a municipal boundary

While Séguénéga and Sima are historically two distinct settlements with discrete land jurisdictions, land agreements between claimants in Séguénéga and lenders in Sima date far back. As such it is difficult to clearly distinguish a boundary along the 5km stretch of dirt track that connects Sima and Séguénéga. The boundary has become blurred over the years, but it was somewhat consented to in 2007 with democratic decentralisation. As soon as local governments were elected, every settlement registered as a 'village' was provided with a signpost, to be placed appropriately by CVDs to mark the entrance of the villages. At that time the CVD from Séguénéga planted theirs at the exit of Séguénéga, claiming in other words that the entire 5km stretch of road belongs to the village of Sima. The fact that this location was not contested at the time seems to indicate that both Sima and Séguénéga residents deemed it an appropriate boundary.

The town of Séguénéga is fast growing due to the recent expansion of artisanal gold mining and this has boosted the local house building industry, and thereby also the demand for sand that is used for making bricks. The bush area along the dirt road between Sima and Séguénéga is well endowed in high quality sand and a growing number of fifty ton trucks come to collect large quantities of sand in the area. In 2011 Residents of Sima however had started complaining to members of the CVD that the passage of trucks was damaging the road and the fields, causing them additional farm work to bring the fields into shape for the rainy season. The CVD in Sima communicated the matter to municipal authorities in Séguénéga. The latter had already decided that a tax would be levied on the trucks and the revenues shared with the village to compensate for the additional work caused. After a few months, and while field owners complaints kept coming, CVD members were not transferred the revenue promised by municipal councillors. In practice however, the measure proved difficult to implement for municipal councillors in Séguénéga: the truck drivers would not come of their own accord, and the councillors claimed to be too busy to monitor the coming and goings of truck drivers. The latter were summoned to a meeting at the

municipality headquarters, and discussions took place but an agreement failed to be reached (general secretary, Séguénéga, interview on 02.12.2011).

In 2011 the CVD committee in Sima handed the issue over to the village-level FUC because by virtue of the project, '*now they oversee the bush*' (CVD representative, Sima, interview on 20.01.2012). Reflecting local concern shared around the extraction of sand, one innovative rule inscribed in the local conventions was the taxation of trucks collecting sand.¹⁴¹ The local convention provisioned that entrepreneurs collecting sand and stones must have an authorisation delivered by the FUC after paying a fee of CFA 2,500 (GBP 3) per truck and per trip, to be shared between the village-level FUC (CFA 1,500) and the municipality (CFA 1,000).¹⁴² Seeing that the local conventions had been signed by all administrative and customary authorities in the villages involved, and that their validation by the municipal council, was imminent, the FUC in Sima started collecting these sand taxes.

In order to collect the taxes, the village-level FUC in Sima picked seven of its members for each day of the week to take turn in delivering hand-written authorisations to truck drivers collecting the sand, against the fee as inscribed in the convention. The FUC members set up a couple of chairs under the signpost indicating the limit between Sima and Séguénéga. While the sand collectors did not contest the fee, the presence of Sima FUC infuriated a farmer from Séguénéga who cultivates a field near where the FUC members sat. His indignation was triggered by the implicit claim that his fields were in fact under the jurisdiction of Sima landed authorities; collars were grabbed and life threats were made. The next day, the signpost under which the FUC members had sat disappeared. It was pulled out of the ground at night. Municipal councillors initiated an investigation to catch the signpost thieves. This momentarily appeased the unrest, but it was also deemed wise to uphold the collection of taxes on sand.

After a few weeks the signpost thieves had still not been found, much to the annoyance of the FUC. Word came from the land priest in Sima that '*the bush had to*

¹⁴¹ In fact this is the only rule that differentiates the local convention of Sima from that of Teongo.

¹⁴² Unpublished document: 'Convention locale de Sima' and 'Convention locale de Teongo', Séguénéga, collected in January 2012 – see appendix.

be closed to strangers' the following cropping season, which was only a few months away. Customary authorities in Sima explained that '*sacrifices need[ed] to be made to encourage the recovery of the soil*' (FUC president, Sima, interview on 08.05.2012). This announcement effectively meant that the hundreds of farmers from Séguénéga cultivating on Sima lands would have to find new lands at very short notice. This thinly disguised threat was matched by a rumour spread by customary authorities in Séguénéga that the gold mining shafts surrounding Séguénéga would be closed to residents originating from Sima. This grave unfolding of events convinced municipal councillors to at least replace the signpost in the hope of appeasing customary authorities in Sima.

Interestingly, two signposts appeared. The first one replaced the one that had been stolen. On it, we could read the name of Sima with an arrow, indicating the direction to the village. A second signpost simply read the name of Sima and it was planted at a new location. It was placed a kilometre or so further, before the compound marking the first inhabitation of the village of Sima. The taxes over the collection of sand were still upheld, but a new boundary had been created for the village of Sima.

As explained in Chapter Four, decentralisation does not happen in a historical vacuum but rather layers over previous institutional arrangements that had been made for local administration. Specifically three fields overlapped and transformed under decentralisation. I showed that the customary field in particular has become revived under multi-party democracy because, unlike the earlier Revolutionary regime, customary institutions of power are not forbidden to partake in local administrative affairs. The awakening of customary politics here illustrates this. *Tiis nanamse* have become enrolled in decentralisation through the choice of donors, but also because the autonomy they used to enjoy vis-à-vis government sanction also limits their capacity to exercise authority over forest resources, and becoming a FUC enhances their authority. At the same time, like the municipal council, they also become faced with an imperative to become autonomous. The fact that *tiis nanamse* draw their legitimacy from customary institutions of power means that the kind of contentious politics that unfolds between *tiis nanamse* and municipal authorities straddles over the democratic and customary fields. However here we see that this politics is not

necessarily an indication of the failure of decentralisation. On the one hand, clearly it would be considered a failure for donors hoping that ‘*a strong present active FUC, [could] go to their elected representatives and tell them that something is not working*’. On the other hand, a new statutory boundary has been created, and the relevance of the rule of law has been enhanced through decentralisation. While, this new boundary is not necessarily the outcome hoped by *tiis nanamse*, the fact that this new boundary has not been contested (yet?) demonstrates the ways in which decentralisation, through the struggle for autonomy, contributes to enhancing the relevance of the rule of law, and thereby also, to state formation in Burkina Faso.

Conclusion

This Chapter operationalizes the concept of field to elucidate the kinds of ideas generated about the state as various institutions of power collaborate and compete over the exercise of authority over natural resource production. It shows that at various scales, the idea of autonomy mediates the kinds of relations that unfold in the democratic field. Firstly, the fact that provisions for the decentralisation of forest management are partial in Burkina has made a space for donors. There, tensions arise between the reluctance of central government to transfer powers to municipal councils and donors who seek to encourage the reform, and they are resolved through the empowerment of an autonomous civil society. On the one hand, the central government is not willing to devolve rights and powers, but sees the value of decentralisation as the potential to hold somebody responsible in a context where participatory approaches have given rise to a multiplicity of civil society associations disconnected from ‘legality’. On the other hand, donors consider that some distance must be kept from government, but decentralisation is a valuable way to recognise the rights of local forest users. In other words, the tension between central government and donors is resolved through the will to create a civil society association that is accountable to, but autonomous from, municipal councils. This is the first aspect to the ways in which autonomy emerges as a significant idea as institutions of power collaborate and compete for authority over resources in the democratic field.

The second aspect pertains to the ways in which the choices of decision-makers are appropriate on the ground. The choice to empower a civil society translates into the empowerment of *tiis nanamse* at the head of Forest User Committees, and thereby overlays the customary and democratic fields. This overlay is inscribed through the creation of municipal forests that bring together FUCs, municipal councillors and the state forest agents thus overlaying the three political fields. This results in clashes between the FUC and the forest agent over the delivery of woodcutting permits. In addition the fact that *tiis nanamse* and municipal councillors are brought in as new authorised claimants in the forest means that they compete with one another over the benefits that can be claimed from forest resources. The last vignette demonstrates that this gives rise to customary politics within the democratic field, which is articulated around the imperatives of autonomy of both the FUC and the municipal council. The outcome of this contentious politics, namely the change in statutory boundary, demonstrates that the politics of autonomy that emerges from decentralisation mediates state formation: while the outcome of the boundary change may not have been the one hoped by *tiis nanamse*, their authority has been enhanced since they became FUCs, they were able to make certain territorial claims, that is, to access the state, and the relevance of the rule of law has been enhanced as a result.

Chapter 9. Conclusion

This thesis has been preoccupied with the problem of qualifying the persistence of nation-states in an era of ‘governance without government’. Particularly, it has been concerned with explaining how enduring forms of institutional power emerge and persist under conditions of weak states. It examines this question through the way local governments under the decentralisation reform in Burkina Faso are able to exercise public authority. It used gold and forest resources as lenses to observe the exercise of public authority. As such, the thesis aims to make a contribution to an understanding of the ways in which democratic decentralisation contributes to state formation in Burkina Faso.

Natural resources are a good lens to examine the exercise of public authority under decentralisation because as has been pointed out in the Introduction to this thesis, they sit at the intersection of the interests of central and local government, citizens and those of a variety of other actors, which operate at different scales and all also place claims of authority over resources (see also Ribot and Larson (2004)). Natural resources are a useful lens because what characterises decentralised local governments as a singular historical form of local administration since Independence is their ability to raise revenue (Chapter Three), and in developing societies that are mostly agrarian-based, the better chance for local governments to raise revenues is from the natural resources that their constituents depend upon.

The study is informed by both critical geographical and anthropological literature that helped anchoring the study theoretically. The scholarship within these fields is divided on the ways in which decentralisation contributes to state formation. Within geography, it has been argued that democratic decentralisation is a ‘janus faced’ process (Swyngedouw 2005). This literature conceptualises decentralisation as a retreat of government, and an erosion of public oversight over the production of natural resources (Prudham 2007). Another body of literature within political ecology argues on the other hand that decentralisation is a form of re-centralisation because local governments have effectively not been devolved the resources and fiscal powers to carry out their mandates (Poteete and Ribot 2011, Ribot, Agrawal, and Larson 2006). It is therefore not clear how democratic decentralisation in the context of

natural resource production contributes to the dynamics of state formation. This contradictory theoretical state of affairs encouraged positing public authority as an empirical question.

In order to inform an empirical enquiry into the exercise of public authority, I draw on a growing body of work within anthropology that focuses on breaking open traditionally state-centric concepts such as sovereignty, territory, and authority (Lund 2011b). They argue that these 'state qualities' emerge from the relations between a variety of state and non-state sanctioned institutions in the everyday. Specifically, an examination of the exercise of public authority in an era of governance-without-government requires that we examine the relation that state-sanctioned institutions entertain with those that are not. As such, relations of recognition between these institutions of power inform the emergence and persistence of forms of institutional power within weak states in particular, but maybe not exclusively.

Together an examination of the literature in both resource geography and anthropology opens up fertile ground for re-conceptualising dynamics of state formation. In this thesis I propose one, which I called the resource-authority nexus. Conceptualising the ways in which resources and public authority are co-produced helped me understand how institutional power emerges and endures under conditions of weak states, and to make a case for the way the politics of autonomy under decentralisation contributes to state formation in Burkina Faso. This conceptualisation was drawn from the insights gathered within critical geography and anthropology, despite their somewhat divergent claims about dynamics of state formation.

The concept of regulation is brought forth from the geographical literature (Bakker and Bridge 2008). This literature has shown that the ability of local governments to become autonomous has much to do with the forms of institutional power that emerge from statutory regulations and the relation that these institutions of power entertain with statutory forms of institutional power. The first question that is asked therefore is to try and understand how statutory regulation shapes the form of institutional power that emerges over gold and forest resources.

A second insight that emerges from the literature is the ubiquity of institutional pluralism. In both geography and anthropology, we see that the exercise of public authority by local governments is mediated by their relation with a number of institutions of power that are more or less recognised by state-sanctioned institutions. The question that thus emerges to help us understand how forms of institutional power emerge and persist under conditions of weak states is to shed light on the relations of recognition between overlapping and competing institutions of power that produce durable authority.

One last insight that emerges from the literatures is related to the discrepancy between policy and practice that is often invoked to characterise weak states. On the one hand, decentralisation is rarely carried out in practice as fiscal powers and resources are retained by central governments, and this lack of transfer is often invoked as a characteristic of state weakness. On the other hand, this has not prevented local governments from exercising public authority locally. As such, we should not try to identify the gap between policy and practice as much as enquire the kinds of relations that populate this gap, and more importantly, to speak back to the question of state formation, to the kinds of ideas that are produced and shared as institutions of power collaborate and compete over authority.

Together these questions help understand how enduring forms of institutional power emerge and persist under conditions of weak states, and specifically how decentralisation contributes to the dynamics of state formation. Below I examine how the mobilisation of these analytical constructs has helped me to answer this question.

Resource concessions and relations at the margins of government

Chapter Five probes one first dimension of weak states, namely the ubiquity of the legal and illegal or formal and informal divide. In order to understand how decentralisation contributes to state formation we need to understand the kind of institutional forms of power that local governments have to face in the everyday. In turn, to understand this institutional form of power, we need to probe the distinction between state and non-state sanctioned institutions of power. In Chapter Five the

analysis of institutional forms of power that emerge from the partial implementation of statutory resource regulation brings to light resource concession holders as significant institutions of power over the small-scale production of gold and woodfuel at the national level. In order to understand the form that these institutions of power take, I probe their relation to government.

The enquiry shows that resource concessions are not the only, and indeed they are a minority, of institutions of power that govern small-scale gold and woodfuel production. Indeed a vast majority of these resources are produced outside these concessions. Importantly it shows that what distinguishes production inside and outside the range of these state-sanctioned institutions of power is the degree of autonomy enjoyed by gold diggers and woodcutters' vis-à-vis government sanction. This difference in degree of autonomy, rather than in kind, such as a legal/illegal binary, better qualifies the distinction between state and non-state sanctioned institution of power.

This claim is based on a two-step argument: firstly, illegal activity does occur under state-sanctioned resource concessions, as illustrated by the case of AAM holders not declaring the gold they produce. Secondly, resource producers outside resource concessions enjoy a more advantageous fiscal regime than those inside: gold diggers inside AAM concessions are subjected to the strict price regime imposed by AAM holders, while those outside do not. Woodcutters inside FMUs are similarly constrained by strict Forest Management Plans and fiscal regime, while woodcutters outside FMUs are only subjected to the partial oversight that forest agents exercise on the ground. What is emphasised here is that the comparative autonomy enjoyed by producers' frames the relation between institutions of power over gold and forest, and local governments struggling for autonomy.

There is more to the relevance of these resource concessions in relation to decentralisation than could be examined here because it was beyond the scope of the case study. Specifically, it should be noted that in the cases of gold and woodfuel resources, resource concession holders entertain a specific kind of relation with local governments. AAM holders need the signature of the municipal council to validate

their application. In the case of woodfuel, there is no decree yet fixing the distribution of benefits between FUM woodcutter cooperatives and local government, but there is evidence that municipal councils have started to tax the trucks that load firewood from these concessions, and as such they have started to claim a share of resource production from FMUs. A comparison of the relations of recognition between cases of the presence and absence of resource concessions would make an important contribution to our understanding of the reconfiguration of the resource-authority nexus under decentralisation.

One important insight that emerges from this analysis on resource concessions is the need to tread more carefully the distinction between state and government. The former is a dynamic process, while the latter is a thing. This resonates with work on hybrid governance, which shows that processes of state building in the era of ‘governance without government’ cannot be enquired through the operation of government agencies alone. This work is very important and a rich debate has emerged around the necessity to take research on state-building dynamics towards an ‘examination of what states are, rather than what they are not’ (Meagher 2012, Blundo 2012). Here I move in the same direction of work that seeks to go beyond ‘pathological’ representations of nation state-building in developing societies and Africa in particular (Hagmann and Peclard 2010). What is emphasised here is the importance of distinguishing institutions of power by relation to government rather than by their statutory form, such as legal/illegal, or private and public. These latter binaries continue to underlie much critical work on governance, but their boundaries are often porous, and retaining them conceptually leads to problematic assumptions about the quantity of state power, such as a zero-sum game between state and non-state power (Barnett 2010). Indeed in this thesis we see that it is through the relation between these institutions that states become built. More attention needs to be paid to the changing quality of nation-states, to the changing social contracts between states and citizens (Nugent 2010), in addition to the quantitative changes in the distribution of benefits to a diversity of political actors (Zimmerer 2013, Bridge 2013).

Recognition and twilight institutions

The second dimension of weak states that is probed in this thesis is the institutional pluralism that characterises the governance of resources. In order to understand the ability of local government to become autonomous, we need to understand the relation they entertain with institutions of power that exercise authority over the production of gold and woodfuel resources. In Chapter Five the insights brought about on the significance of resource concessions also showed that small-scale production mostly occurs outside these concessions, and without government-sanctioned license holders. In these cases institutions of power appear invisible at first, and the concept of recognition brings them to light. Focusing on relations of recognition between institutions of power that exercise authority over the production of gold and woodfuel resources in Séguénéga helps shed light on the ways in which durable authority is produced in a context where state-sanction is partial, but not altogether absent.

There is more to relations of recognition than was analysed here, partly because of some missing data on the way woodcutters organise themselves as an institution of power vis-à-vis the forest agent and *tiis nanamse*, as acknowledged in Chapter Three. Nevertheless, the relations of recognition analysed here shed some important insights into the ways in which durable authority is produced in a context where government sanction is partial but not altogether absent. On the one hand the twilight institutions of power over gold and forest resources, namely shaft owners and *tiis nanamse*, are reasonably autonomous from state-sanctioned frameworks. On the other hand, their ability to enforce collectively binding decisions over resource production is also mediated by the recognition they afford from state-sanctioned institutions. This comes clearly in the case of shaft owners who have become able to exercise authority that is completely detached from any legal framework, while this authority also depends upon the fact that a certain number of legally-sanctioned institutions of power in the everyday ‘turn a blind eye’ on their activity, such as the police, the *préfet* and the industrial mining company staff. Similarly, in the case of forest resources, *tiis nanamse* have emerged as a product of a number of different relations, mostly involving both customary authorities, which are not state-sanctioned institutions of

power in Burkina, and the forest agent. However the extent to which these twilight institutions are able to exercise public authority is limited by their lack of recognition. A corollary is that they need further recognition, and this is precisely where the relevance of the democratic field lays.

In the name of decentralisation

The third dimension of weak states that is probed through this thesis is related to the fact that policies as they are devised are generally not carried out in practice. The decentralisation reform is a case in point as local governments have been created but they have been devolved very little powers and resources to carry out the mandate they are assigned. In Chapters Seven and Eight we saw that this does not necessarily mean that the reform makes no difference at all. On the contrary it is precisely because these transfers have not been effectuated that a kind of politics emerges and as this politics plays out, a variety of institutions of power that are not government-sanctioned are able to enter the government-sanctioned arena and claim access to government.

The concept of field is mobilised in the last two Chapters to understand the ways in which forms of institutional power persist under weak states. It illuminates the ways in which the nation-state is allowed to persist and continues to be relevant in relation to natural resource production through the ways in which institutions of power that exercise public authority over the production of resources become enrolled in the ‘democratic field’. Seeing state formation as an effect of decentralisation, as a field of relations, rather than a rationality that is imposed from above, allows to shed light on the ways in which overlapping institutions of power collaborate and compete in the exercise of authority over the production of gold and forest resources.

Operationalising the concept of field sheds light on two significant dynamics. Firstly, institutions of power become enrolled, rather than subjectified to ‘governmental rationality’. More specifically, they come to act ‘in the name of decentralisation’ (Muñoz 2008). I examine the way institutions of power collaborate and compete over the exercise of authority in the production of gold and forest resources. This sheds

light on the idea of autonomy that underlies the appropriation of decentralisation frameworks by twilight institutions of power. Shaft owners become municipal councillors because decentralisation enhances the scope of authority that they are able to exercise, and *tiis nanamse* become ‘naturally’ enrolled as members of a Forest User Committee aiming to oversee the management of a municipal forest. Crucially, then, decentralisation is not simply a technology of rule, but is also relevant for institutions of power on the ground. More specifically, it is relevant for institutions of power that have come to exercise public authority over the production of resources at the margins of statutory regulation.

The second significant insight that emerges from the appropriation of decentralisation is the kind of relation that is produced between institutions of power is a contentious one. Specifically in both the cases of gold and woodfuel production in Séguénéga, we see that twilight institutions engage in decentralisation in ways that bring them in competition with the local government, because the latter has become a new institution of power able to lay claims to authority over resources, through the imperative of autonomy. It seems therefore that the tension that has opposed central government and resource producers has been re-scaled. Indeed the complaints of shaft owners in relation to the industrial mining project are not turned to the central government that has ‘sold the land’ but rather against municipal councillors who are unable to represent their interests. Similarly, *tiis nanamse* who had been dissatisfied about the forest agent’s authority over the bush, are now turning against municipal councillors. These tensions are important, and they resonate in important ways with other work on decentralisation, specifically regarding the relation that local governments entertain with user committees created under participatory development projects (Manor 2004, Juul 2006). However the concern here is not to make claims about the systematic conflicting relations that emerge between local governments and twilight institutions, rather it is more interesting to ask how the relevance of the state, or that of the rule of law, has transformed as these institutions of power relate with one another, and more specifically, what idea about the state is produced out of these specific relations?

Chapters Seven and Eight shed light on the significance of autonomy as a principle that underlies the way institutions of power collaborate and compete in the field of decentralisation, and through which government-sanctioned frameworks become more relevant. The creation of the democratic field is predicated upon the idea of autonomy, or ‘self government’, and this idea reconfigures the rules of the game and erects a new ‘structure of opportunity’ for competition and collaboration between institutions of power. This is illustrated through the particular kind of politics that emerges as it is articulated around the idea of autonomy. Shaft owners-cum-municipal councillors, dissatisfied with the inability of the rest of the municipal council in Séguénéga to represent their interests against an industrial mining project are able to ‘claim autonomy’ by filing a demand for particular gold mining villages to be erected as municipalities independent from Séguénéga. Importantly, they ground this claim in the fact that they have better fulfilled their duty towards their village, as elected representatives, than the municipal councillors in Séguénéga who have neglected their demands around improved access to health and education. The principle of autonomy also underlies the relation between municipal councillors and *tiis nanamse*. As the latter have been turned into a FUC, they also have an imperative to become autonomous, and they are able to collect taxes. However this imperative clashes with that of the local government and a particular kind of customary politics ensues and is articulated around their respective struggle for autonomy.

These instances of contentious resource politics may indicate that decentralisation fails ‘on its own terms’ but it effectively also constitute a crucial moment of ‘shopping’ opportunity that increases the relevance of the rule of law. The fact that shaft owners have become enrolled in decentralisation as municipal councillors, and the fact that *tiis nanamse* have been mobilised as a FUC ‘in the name of decentralisation’ gives them an opportunity to ‘shop’ with the state, to get access to it. As they do so, the relevance of the state is increase, and the margins of government shift.

Taking the politics of autonomy further on...

Asking how enduring forms of institutional power emerge and persist under conditions of weak states from the vantage point of local government sheds light on the fact that a local government is much messier than often assumed. Elected officials are not just politicians subjected to the patronage relations that tie them to national level political elites. Nor are they only scapegoats blamed by their constituents and central governments for not being accountable to their constituents (Crook 2003). Shedding light on the twilight institutions that also govern gold and forest resources, we become able to see that a local government is also constituted by powerful gold shaft owners, in the case of the local elected representatives in Bakou, and by sons of traditional chiefs who have certain 'moral obligations' that bring them into conflict with some segments of society, as is the case of municipal councillors in Séguénéga opposing them to FUC/*tiis nanamse* from Sima over the collection of sand taxes. The ability of local governments to exercise public authority is mediated by these relations, which are not always well captured in classical governmentality approaches that focus on single rationality, on the internalisation of these governmental rationalities, and on the hegemony of a certain rationality over another. The latter approach begs that we ask questions that seek to unravel relations of domination, by either coercion or consent, and of course 'looking for domination' means that it will be found- but as shown here, these questions only present a partial story and sustain contradictory theoretical explanations for the significance of decentralisation in processes of state formation, as they are highlighted in the review of literature in Chapter Two.

There are two specific contributions that the politics of autonomy seeks to make. These contributions pertain the two bodies of literature that have influenced this study. Within resource geography, I wish to emphasise the importance of politics as a moment of state formation rather than state failure. Within anthropology, I emphasise the significance of autonomy in relation to identity politics that has been shown to unfold in contexts of decentralisation.

This thesis could have been framed as a case of the ‘politics of re-scaling governance’ and it did to a certain extent, but it does not speak explicitly to this literature. This does not mean that it cannot make a contribution to it. Specifically, here, I wish to emphasise the importance of politics, not simply as a driving process of state formation, but as a singular moment through which the state become built. Important work in geography has shed light on the significance of the politics of scale in the construction of space, particularly national space, or territory, in the era of ‘governance without government’.

Democratic decentralisation policies epitomise this dynamics of re-scaling. They promulgate the idea that, by privileging ‘the local’ as a site of governance, a fairer type of democratic politics may unfold as the foundation of nation-states. The literature on the politics of scale has analysed the outcomes of such advocacies and pointed out that ‘the local is a ‘mythical’ reality’ (Swyngedouw 2000) - far from giving way to a fairer type of politics, rescaling government downwards has also shifted the geometries of socio-spatial power such that the institutions of power operating globally are better able to stake claims over resources and authority and impose them onto ‘the local’. Such dynamics is clear in the case presented here: the local politics that unfolds under the claims of a transnational mining company (in the case of the mining industry) and an international NGO (in the case of the development industry) does not challenge these claims. Specifically, while the claims to resources and authority made by these global actors do not work to the advantage of local resource producers, the kind of politics that unfolds in the democratic field challenges the legitimacy of the local government, rather than that of global claimants or that of the central government. It could then be argued that democratic decentralisation results in re-scaling the tensions between state and citizens downwards, and this is clear with the kind of opposition that emerges between municipal councillors, representatives of local government in Séguénéga, and twilight institutions. At the same time, emphasising the ‘glocal’ linkages means that we loose sight of the intermediary scale that holds these linkages together. Indeed, while the government may have been downsized, the nation state does not disappear under ‘glocalisation’ (Swyngedouw 2001). For example national boundaries are still maintained and the rule of law continues to be a fundamental distributive mechanism

that frames glocal linkages. The fundamental question then is to try and understand the ways in which the nation-state is able to sustain these linkages without disappearing (Brenner, Peck, and Theodore 2010).

In this thesis I wish to emphasise the significance of contentious politics as a fundamental moment through which these linkages are made. In other words, along with others (Turner 2004, Turner et al. 2012), I argue that these conflicts may be a manifestation of the failure of government, but they are on the other hand by no means a manifestation of the failure of states. Rather, they are precisely the moments when states become built.

A second contribution that this thesis seeks to make through the analytic of autonomy is related to work on the politics of belonging and citizenship in Africa. As has been shown in recent work, the institutionalisation of multi-democracy in African countries has often given rise to identity-based forms of national and local politics. This is based on evidence of the expression of ethnic factionalism and claims of autochthony made under democratic restructuring (Bayart, Geschiere, and Nyamnjoh 2001, Geschiere 2009, Hilgers 2011). Interestingly, the kind of politics analysed in Chapter Eight around decentralised forest governance speaks directly to this argument, while that in Chapter Seven does not. Indeed, in the case of contentious resource politics analysed in relation to competing claims to gold resources in Séguénéga, belonging is not expressed through ethnic membership or customary politics. This does not mean that such claims may not be raised in the future, but it is significant that ethnicity is not systematically the register through which claims of belonging are made under democratic restructuring. This suggests that what is at stake in the politics of belonging is not so much the recognition of a particular ethnic identity, but the recognition of political rights or citizenship (Lund 2011a).

It may be argued that shaft owners are part of a wider political community that has not been granted recognition by the state as ‘full citizens’ since they do not hold legal rights to the shafts that they work on. Under decentralisation, the discourse of autonomy, or ‘self-government’, gives them an opportunity to get access to these rights. It may be argued then that the politics of belonging and the register of

autochthony mobilised in many African contexts under democratic restructuring is the manifestation of a much wider political struggle for citizenship, where ethnicity is only one register mobilised for the articulation of this struggle (Dorman, Hammet, and Nugent 2007). Here I suggest that framing the linkages between democracy and the politics of belonging through the lens of autonomy, rather than autochthony, widens the focus from belonging, to citizenship. The discourse of autonomy, or 'self government' that is promulgated through democratic decentralisation opens up an opportunity for institutions of power that are not government-sanctioned to be able 'to shop' with state-sanctioned institutions of power. Through the politics of autonomy, decentralisation increases the relevance of the rule of law, but it also opens up an opportunity for claiming citizenship.

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Appendix: List of materials and sources

Unpublished Documents

Document title	Doc Date	Date acquired
DECENTRALISATION		
Programme de sortie pour le renouvellement des bureaux CVD	24.10.2011	24.10.2011
'Projet culturel: Volet theatre forum, Commune de Séguénéga'	28.05.2011	24.10.2011
Plan Communal de Développement pour la Commune de Séguénéga	Decembre 2008	January 2011
FOREST		
Compte rendu d'activite pour 'un departement, une foret'	01.10.2003	30.01.2012
Guide Methodologique pour la creation et la gestion des espaces de conservation par les collectivites territoriales	Avril 2010	29.01.2012
Situation d'execution du projet T4C dans la commune de Seguenega	16.02.2012	16.02.2012
Projet de gouvernance locale des ressources forestieres au Burkina Faso. Note de Presentation.	July 2011	16.02.2012
Convention locale de la foret de Sima	Jan 2012	Jan 2012
Convention locale de la foret de Teonsgo	Jan 2012	Jan 2012
Diagnostic de la foret de Sima	Jan 2012	2008
Mission d'appui à la préparation du projet entrant dans le cadre de la mise en œuvre du Plan d'Investissement du Programme d'Investissement Forestier	07 au 18 janvier 2013	09.09.2013
Programme d'investissement forestier. Projet de gestion decentralise des forets et espaces boises (PGDFEB). Cadre de gestion environnementale et sociale (CGES).	Oct 2013	10.12.2013
Cadre politique, légal et institutionnel du secteur forestier Informations de bases.	31.03.2008	10.12.2013
NGO minutes from the training for village-level FUC representatives	15.11.2011	30.01.2012
Ticket from woodcutting payments	20 th January 2011 to 30 th December 2011	30.01.2012
Minutes from internal FUC meetings	From 30 th 2011 to 3 rd December 2011	30.01.2012
Projet de gouvernance locale des ressources forestieres au Burkina Faso (Financement Dfid & ASDI) – Note de presentation	July 2011	16.02.2012
Rapport de choix des sites forestiers	August 2008	16.02.2012

GOLD		
CONAPEM – La Corporation Nationale des Artisans et Exploitans de Petites Mines du Burkina	n/d	12.04.2012
Autorisations d'exploitation artisanale valides par Provinces/departement	Mars 2011	28.11.2011
Permis d'exploitation artisanale semi-mecanisee d'or	2006	28.11.2011
Convention portant cahier des charges fixant conditions d'exploitation artisanale traditionnelle des substances des mines au Burkina Faso	2006	28.11.2011
Etat des permis de recherche valides	31.05.2010	28.11.2011
Etude du diagnostique du cadre institutionnel et juridique de l'activite miniere industrielle au Burkina Faso: Cas de Poura et Essakane	October 2006	25.11.2011
Situation de l'orpaillage au Burkina Faso – Pratiques et perspectives	November 2009	28.11.2011
OREZONE – Technical report on the mineral resource estimation of the SEGA (Tiba) gold project.	2009	online

Participant Observation

Event	Date	Place	People present
DECENTRALISATION			
Ordinary session of the municipal council	05.12.2011	Séguénéga	Municipal councillors
Renewal of CVD committees	24.10.2011 to 26.10.2011	Several villages in the commune of Séguénéga	Municipal councillors Village-level CVD
FOREST			
Validation workshop for the local convention of the forest of Sima	Nov 2011	Sima	NGO local facilitator FUCs
Validation workshop for the local convention of the forest of Teonsogo	Nov 2011	Teonsogo	NGO local facilitator FUCs Municipal councillor
Extraordinary session of the municipal council.	16.05.2012	Séguénéga	Municipal councillors NGO local facilitator FUC presidents Forest agent
Closed door meeting about the distribution of roles and responsibilities between FUCs and municipal council	19.02.2012	Séguénéga	FUC presidents Mayor Local NGO facilitator
FUC training on the elaboration of a management plan	06 & 07.03.2012	Séguénéga	FUC presidents and some representatives Forest agent NGO local facilitator Others

GOLD			
Field visit by OREZONE staff	29.11.2011	Several gold digging villages	Senior engineer National level community relations officer
Community consultation meeting at OREZONE HQ with miners from Bakou	06.12.2011	OREZONE HQ near Séguénéga	Senior engineer National level community relations officer Shaft owners Bakou
Social gathering of gold diggers	December 2012	Séguénéga	Several gold diggers

Interviews

DECENTRALISATION			
No.	Interviewee	Date	Where?
A1	DG/FOMER staff	13.04.2012	Ouagadougou
A2	PGRLA staff	28.11.2012	Ouagadougou
A3	General director of Territorial Collectivities, Ministry of Territorial administration	19.12.2012	Ouagadougou
A4	PNGT 2 national coordinator	05.12.2012 28.11.2012	Ouagadougou
A5	PACT staff Ouagadougou	06.12.2012	Ouagadougou
A6	PNGT2 regional coordinator (North region)	07.12.2012	Ouagadougou
A7	Préfet Séguénéga	16.11.2011	Séguénéga
A8	Municipal councillor, head of general affairs, Séguénéga	09.12.2011	Séguénéga
A9	Municipal councillor, head of environment and development affairs, Séguénéga	17.11.2011	Séguénéga
A10	Mayor of Séguénéga	15.05.2012	Séguénéga
A11	Noufou Traoré, SG, Séguénéga	12.11.2011	Séguénéga
A12	Mayor of Séguénéga	10.12.2012	Séguénéga
A13	Mayor of Séguénéga	24.12.2012	Séguénéga
A14	CVD group interview Sima	16.11.2011	Sima

FOREST			
No.	Interviewee	Date	Where
B1	Head of DIFOR, ministry of environment	22.02.2012	Ouagadougou
B2	INGO National project director	29.03.2012	Ouagadougou
B3	International programme Director, TreeAid UK office	07.11.2012	Ouagadougou
B4	Funder of project SIDA	14.02.2012	Ouagadougou
B5	Head of Direction Generale de la Nature, ministry of environment	11.04.2012	Ouagadougou

B6	GAGF president	28.12.2012	Ouagadougou
B9	Woodcutter	05.11.2011	Sima
B10	Consultant lawyer TreeAid	21.11.2011	Séguénéga
B11	Village Chef	21.04.2012	Sima
B12	CVD representative	21.04.2012	Sima
B13	CVD representative	02.04.2012	Doussaré
B15	Forest agent	16.04.2012	Séguénéga
B16	Tiis naaba/FUC president	05.11.2011	Sima
B17	Tiss naaba/FUC president	30.01.2012	Sima
B18	Tiis naaba/FUC president (also appears as Sima resident in Chapter 6 because the FUC had not been explained at that point)	15.04.2012	Sima
B19	Tiis naaba/FUC president	08.05.2012	Sima
B20	Tiis naaba/FUC president	19.12.2012	Sima
B21	Woodcutter/gold miner	17.10.2011	Sima
B22	FUC Peul member	09.02.2012	Sima
B23	Government consultant	06.03.2012	Séguénéga
B24	NGO local project facilitator	20.11.2011	Séguénéga
B25	Environmental law consultant		Ouagadougou
B26	Tidjani FUC president	09.02.2012	Seleyrdo
B27	Elder woman	08.05.2012	Sima
B28	Forest agent	04.05.2012	Séguénéga
B19	IUCN director	February 2012	Ouagadougou
B31	IUCN regional programme director	February 2012	Ouagadougou
B32	Forest agent	15.12.2012	Séguénéga
B33	NGO local facilitator	16.04.2012	Séguénéga
B34	CVD Sima	16.01.2011	Sima
B35	CVD Sima	29.01.2012	Sima
B36 (group)	FUC Bassanga	07.02.2012	Bassanga
B37 (group)	FUC Bassanga	21.02.2012	Bassanga
B38 (group)	FUC Doussaré	17.04.2012	Doussaré
B39 (group)	FUC Doussaré	04.04.2012	Doussaré
B40	Woodcutter	19.04.2012	Sittigo
B41	FUC Koumna	20.04.2012	Koumna
B42	Land chief	11.12.2011	Sima
B43	Village chief	11.12.2011	Sima
B44	FUC Sittigo	09.05.2012	Sittigo
B45	FUC Mogom	11.05.2012	Mogom
B46	Woodcutter	21.02.2012	Bassanga
B47	Séguénéga resident	01.11.2011	Séguénéga
B48	Elder	21.04.2012	Sima
B49	Village chief	13.04.2012	Sima
C50	General secretary	02.12.2011	Séguénéga
C51	Resident	15.05.2012	Séguénéga
C52	Woodcutter	21.02.2012	Bassanga
C53	Woodcutter	04.04.2012	Doussaré

GOLD

No.	Interviewee	Date	Place
C1	Small-scale mining director Ministry of Mining	30.03.2012	Ouagadougou
C2	General director Ministry of Mining	23.02.2012	Ouagadougou
C3	Legal expert	23.02.2012	Ouagadougou

	Ministry of Mining		
C4	Cadastre staff Ministry of Mining	04.12.2012	Ouagadougou
C5	Cadastre staff/ex-CBMP agent in Séguénéga Ministry of Mining	30.03.2012	Ouagadougou
C6	First CBMP director/World Bank consultant	05.12.2012	Ouagadougou
C7	Small-scale mining department Ministry of Mining	06.12.2012	Ouagadougou
C8	Mining engineer OREZONE	27.10.2011	Séguénéga
C9	Vice-president OREZONE	27.10.2011	Séguénéga
C10	Local community relations officer OREZONE	06.12.2011	Séguénéga
C11	Director ORCADE	12.04.2012	Ouagadougou
C12	President CONAPEM	12.04.2012	Ouagadougou
C13	Small-scale mining direction staff Ministry of Mining	19.12.2012	Ouagadougou
C14	Gold digger /CVD	29.07.2011	Bakou
C15	Shaft supervisor/Ex CBMP buyer, Bakou	29.04.2012	Séguénéga
C16	Ex CBMP/buyer	29.04.2012	Séguénéga
C17	Gold digger/CVD	03.12.2011	Bakou
C19	CVD representative	16.11.2011	Bakou
C20	Shaft owner	01.05.2012	Bakou
C21	Female CVD	14.11.2012	Gambo
C22	Municipal councillor/shaft owner	09.11.2011	Gambo
C23	Farmer/gold digger	14.05.2012	Bakou
C24	Shaft supervisor miner	01.05.2012	Bakou
C25	Orpaillage digger	06.12.2011	Bakou
C26	Orpaillage miner/CVD	02.12.2011	Bakou
C27	Municipal councillor	10.05.2012	Bakou
C28	Tiis naaba	03.04.2012	Bakou
C29	Orpaillage miner	30.04.2012	Bakou
C30	Orpaillage miner	03.04.2012	Tiba
C31a	National community relations officer OREZONE	21.11.2011	Ouagadougou
C31b	National community relations officer OREZONE	06.12.2011	Bakou
C32	Gold digger	01.04.2012	Bakou
C33	CVD representative	01.04.2012	Bakou
C34	Head of local police	26.07.2011	Séguénéga
C35	Secretary general municipality	28.10.2011	Séguénéga
C36	Shaft supervisor	01.08.2011	Bakou
C37	Small-scale mining Department, Ministry of mine/ex-CBMP agent	04.12.2012	Ouagadougou
C38	National Community relations officer AMARA	13.12.2012	Séguénéga
C39	CVD group interview Bakou	11.11.2011	Bakou
C40	Shaft supervisors group interview and mapping of shafts	14.11.2011	Bakou
C41	Ex-CDR/orpaillage miners	02.04.2012	Bakou

C42	Shaft owner	06.05.2012	Bakou
C43	Ex-Bakou resident	21.11.2012	Ouagadougou
C44	Tikaré residents, orpaillage miner	11.12.2012	Séguénéga
C45	Gold digger	28.07.2011	Bakou
C46	Gold digger	28.04.2012	Bakou
C47	Gold digger	04.04.2012	Bakou
C48	Female gold digger	25.07.2011	Tiba
C49	Shaft supervisor	14.12.2012	Séguénéga
C50	Gold digger	02.08.2011	Séguénéga
C51	Gold digger	13.08.20	Sima
C52	Gold digger	26.07.2011	Gambo
C53	Shaft supervisor	08.12.2011	Bakou
C54	Shaft owner	02.08.2011	Bakou
C55	Gold digger	22.10.2011	Bakou
C56	Municipal councillor	28.10.2011	Séguénéga
C57	General secretary	02.12.2011	Séguénéga
C58	General secretary	16.12.2012	Séguénéga
C59	Shaft owner	09.11.2011	Gambo
C60	CVD representative	17.12.2011	Bakou
C60	Shaft supervisor	22.10.2011	Bakou
C61	Ministry of Agriculture	14.02.2012	Ouagadougou
C62	School teacher	03.11.2011	Bakou
C63	Shaft owner	12.12.2012	Bakou
C64	Mayor	11.12.2012	Séguénéga
C65	School teacher	25.12.2012	Bakou
C66	Shaft owner's wife	14.11.2011	Bakou
C67	Séguénéga resident/AMARA security staff	10.12.2012	Séguénéga
C68	General secretary	10.12.2012	Séguénéga
C69	Bar owner	11.12.2012	Bakou
C70	Sima resident	11.12.2012	Bakou

List of laws and decrees

History of administration

Law no. 56-619 du 23 juin 1956, dite loi-cadre Defferre.
Law no. 041/59/AI du 9 Décembre 1959.
Decree no. 189/PRES/INT du 08 Juin 1962.
Decree no. 326 PRES/IS/DI du 28 juillet 1964, relatif au mode de désignation des chefs de village, J.O de la République de Haute-Volta, 30 juillet 1964.
Decree no. 81 0354/CMRPN/PRES du 5 août 1981 fixant les limites de compétence territoriale entre autorités coutumières et autorités administratives.
Zatu ANIV-37/FNR/PRES
Zatu AN VII-10/FP-PRES du 12 octobre 1989
Zatu n° AN VIII-0039 bis/FP/PRES, portant Réorganisation Agraire et Foncière (RAF)
Decree no. 97-054/PRES/PM/MEF du 06 février 1997 portant modalités d'application de la loi portant RAF au Burkina Faso
Law no. 055-2004 portant Code Général des Collectivités Territoriales au Burkina Faso
Decree no. 2007- 032/PRES/PM/MATD ‘portant organisation, composition et fonctionnement des Conseils Villageois de Développement (CVD)
Law no. 034-2009/AN portant regime foncier rural, 16th June 2009

Mining legislation

Decree no. 96-231/PRES/PM/MEM on 3rd July 1996, and Decree no. 97- 035/MEM/MEF/MCIA on 14th May 1997.
Decree no. 015-2001/AN of 4th July 2001

Mining Code (1997; 2003)

Forest legislation

Arrêté 283/CP du 16 août 1948 Haute-Volta créant le cadre local des gardes forestiers
Decree no. 564-PRES-TFP-P portant Statuts Particuliers des Corps du Personnel du Cadres des Eaux et Forêts
Decree no. 1970 132 PRES-TFP-P Portant creation des agents techniques des Eaux et Forêts
Circulaire no. 346 bis MET-CAPRO du 14 May 1984
Ordonnance no. 85-47 du 29 Aout 1985 portant reglementation des feux de brousse, de l’exploitation du bois de chauffe et du charbon de bois et de la divagation des animaux domestiques
Circulaire no. 346 bis MET-CAPRO du 14 May 1984 portant réglementation provisoire de l'exploitation du bois et du charbon de bois au Burkina Faso.
Decree no. 2010-400/PRES/PM/MAHRH/ MRA/MECV/MEF/MA TD portant modalités d’élaboration et de validation des chartes foncières locales

Forest Code (1997; 2011)